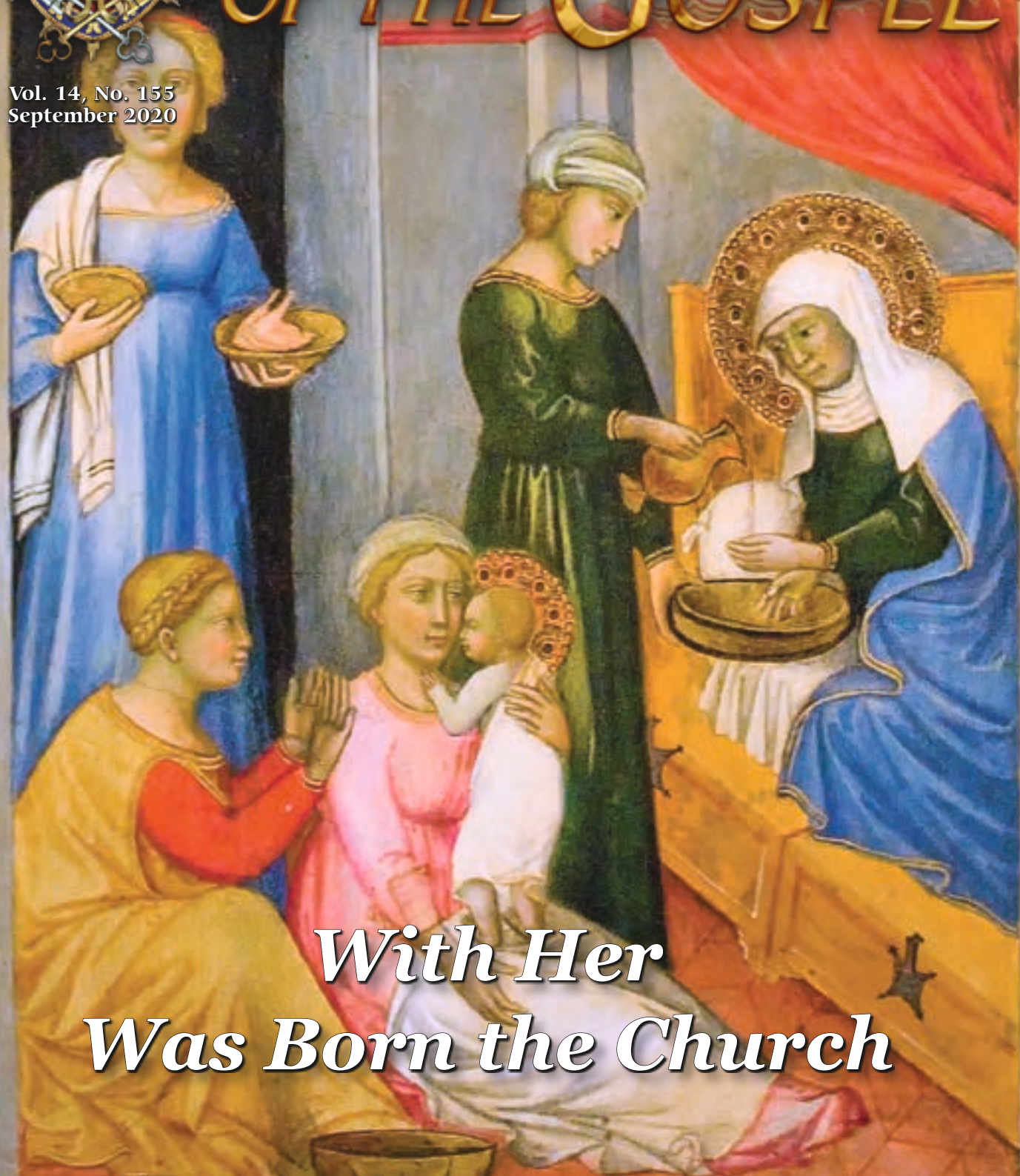




HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Vol. 14, No. 155
September 2020



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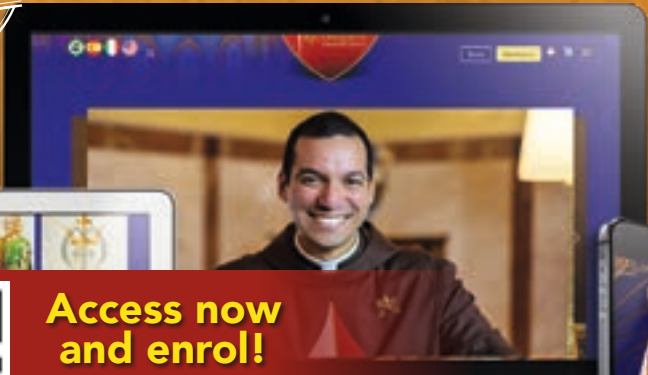


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HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Vol. 14, No. 155, September 2020

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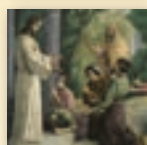
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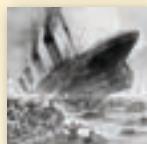
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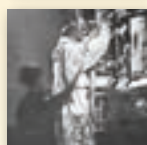
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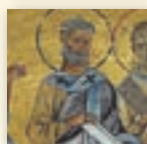
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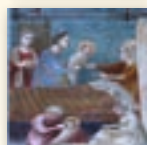
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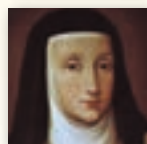
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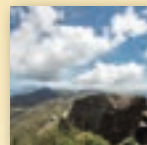
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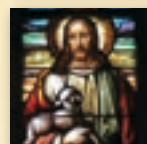
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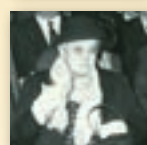
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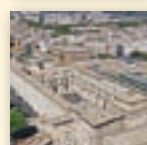
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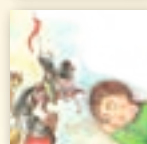
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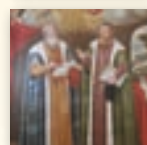
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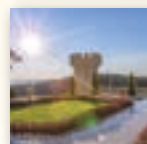
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OUR READERS WRITE

I DREAM OF AN EDUCATION LIKE THIS IN OUR SCHOOLS

I dream of a day when at least some of our educational institutions will show the courage and sagacity to promote education similar to that received by the students of the Heralds of the Gospel International College at Tabor, mentioned in last March's issue if this Magazine – an education which alone can reflect *the Way, the Truth and the Life*, that is, He who launched a massive revolution following which alone humans can aspire to be perfect as their Heavenly Father is perfect.

*Bishop Edwin Colaco
Emeritus of Aurangabad – India*

THANK YOU FOR REPRESENTING THE CHURCH

This is the best magazine for spiritual growth; reading it is like traveling a unforgettable journey. The articles not only enrich knowledge but they also inspire beautiful meditations that elevate your spirit.

Especially in these days, when there is more time for reading, take the opportunity to do so; it will give you the fresh air of hope that we all need in these difficult times. Thanks to the Heralds of the Gospel for representing Our Holy Mother Church, in caring and providing for our needs.

*Maria Alegrett
Via catholicmagazine.news*

THE EUCHARIST, HEART OF THE CHURCH

This reading has been marvellous for me and my family during this time we are living through. We must let ourselves be led by God's hand. *The Eucharist, Heart of the Church* was an excellent article. It is also wonderful to seek Jesus by means of the Eucha-

rist and to believe in His power to transform and save our lives.

*Feliciano Severino
Via revistacatolica.com.br*

IT TRULY WAS A MIRACLE!

I work at the hospital where Sr. Ana Lúcia Iamasaki was admitted and I witnessed everything. I can confirm all the facts reported by her in the article *Devastating Disaster, Prodigious Cure*.

It truly was a miracle!

*Aleionei José Pacheco
Joinville – SC*

ASSESSMENT OF VARIOUS ARTICLES

Thanks to Msgr. João for the magnificent reflection *God's Kingdom, a Kingdom of Warfare!* It is indeed a constant struggle between good, which became ours at Baptism, and evil, which constantly afflicts us.

On the other hand, I really liked the metaphor about an ugly cavern and a beautiful and majestic cave, in the article *A Palace or a Cave?* Congratulations to the author! We choose the path: the lie or the Truth and the Life.

The article about St. Boniface is also great, my compliments to the author! It is interesting to find out about the lives of the Saints, especially the martyrs. They give us an example of courage to announce the Word of God, knowing that we will not please everyone, especially the reprobates.

*Pedro Alexandre Ferreira
Via revistacatolica.com.br*

WORDS OF WISDOM INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

What insightful and moving words from St. Francis Xavier in the article *Sincere and Religious Love!* They fortify our souls and help us to forget our sufferings so we can forge ahead.

I thank God and His instruments for this wonderful work of enriching us with this drop of grace that touches

the innermost depths of our Christian souls. These are words of wisdom, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

*Ugo Eduardo López
Via revistacatolica.com.br*

A FRATERNAL EMBRACE FROM THE AMAZON

The reading of the article *Parents of the Messiah's Mother, Grandparents of God!* invites us to rise above the present moment. We understand from this beautiful and enlightening reflection how everything happened according to the natural order, and thus we grasp the true essence of the "grandparents of Jesus," thereby enriching our faith.

By showing us the merits of our Most Holy and pure Mother as the Mediatrix of the Holy Spirit, we understand, in this context, the true and inspiring role of St. Joachim and St. Anne, grandparents of Jesus and ours...

Cheers! Very moving reading! A fraternal embrace from the Amazon.

*Sandra C. Couto
Via revistacatolica.com.br*

PERFECT AND NECESSARY CATECHESIS

The article *Staying Home, in Our Domestic Church* is a perfect and necessary catechesis. I thank God for this gift from Heaven: a wealth of information!

*Anaete Colombi
Via revistacatolica.com.br*

UNSURPASSED IN EVERYTHING IT TEACHES

The last monthly issue of the *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine I received was that of April, and I do not know why. This magazine is of infinite help, since it is unsurpassed in all that it teaches us. I thank all the Heralds for their evangelizing work.

*Pedro García
Azuqueca de Henares – Spain*

MARY, MOTHER AND QUEEN OF THE CHURCH

Throughout the world, the Catholic Liturgy venerates Our Lady as Mother of the Church. First among the foundations for this devotion is the episode in which Christ himself declared to St. John, from the height of the Cross: “Behold your Mother!” (Jn 19:27). Symbolically, the sole Apostle to be in attendance at this sorrowful hour represented alone the nascent Church – made up of weak but dearly beloved children – whose salvation Jesus purchased with His Death.

Although the words of the Redeemer consecrated this title of Mary’s motherhood, it was not only on Calvary that She earned it. In fact, the role of a Mother is to give life to her children; thus, in giving birth to the Founder of the Church, the Blessed Virgin also became Mother of the work that He would found.

What is more, while Jesus was lying in the Sepulchre, where was the faith of the Church? Where was its hope safeguarded? Where were its perseverance and fidelity to be found? In the Heart of Mary alone, burning with zeal like a torch in the darkness of unbelief, while those who had accompanied Our Lord languished in doubt, discouragement and cowardice. During these three days Our Lady preserved, protected and nourished the nascent Church...

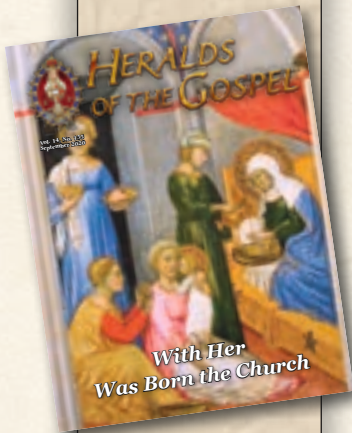
And She holds this office until today, as the Mediatrix of Divine Grace, lifeblood of the Church. Obtaining everything from God, She is the channel of life that flows from Christ to each of the faithful.

Being Queen, Mary rules history in its entirety, governing the destiny of nations, the application of rewards and punishments, the flourishing of civilizations; and She rules each individual soul, in all its particularities, its joys and difficulties, its triumphs and failures. In a certain sense, She “governs” God Himself, for She has conquered His Heart and has also been constituted as its Queen.

Now, the queenly state corresponds closely to the role of mother: if the mother is the queen of the home, the queen is the mother of the people. Thus, Our Lady is Queen of the Church, that is, its Mother, and She cares for it – both collectively, as an institution, and individually, in each of its members – with all the affection of the best of mothers and the strength of the most powerful of queens.

On the highest and most magnificent pinnacles, virtues are intertwined. Mary supports, protects, stimulates, corrects, forgives, repairs and advises... She appears at the same time as Lady, Teacher, Guide, Pillar and Star. However, the titles that most suit Her are those of Queen and Mother, because they define Her most perfectly. In fact, when we consider Her as Queen, we venerate the power that the Most Holy Trinity has bestowed on Her: this power is the almighty sceptre of God! When we invoke Her as our Mother, we celebrate the joy of having Her close to us, and we are filled with hope to see the goodness and love with which She exercises all her power to our benefit.

How many reasons we have to turn to Her with confidence, certain that we will be heard! ✧



*Nativity of Our
Lady, by Andrea di
Bartolo - National
Gallery of Art,
Washington*

Photo: Gustavo Kralj



The Parable of the Crippled Woman

When the soul aspires to heavenly goods, it remains upright, without the least bending. And evil spirits, seeing it persevere in its virtue, cannot “pass over” it, that is, sow unclean desires.

In the Gospel passage just proclaimed (Lk 13:6-13), you have heard, brethren, the account of two episodes – that of the barren fig tree and that of the woman who was bent over – that call our attention to God’s merciful goodness. The first expresses it by a comparison, the second makes it tangible by means of an action. [...]

People with bent spirits

“And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself” (cf. Lk 13:11). [...]

All sinners are concerned about the things of the earth and do not seek those of Heaven. They are incapable of looking upwards. Following the desires that pull them down, their spirits become bent over and they see only that upon which they think without ceasing.

Look to your hearts, dear brethren, and examine continually the thoughts that have revolved in your mind: one thinks of honours, the other of money and another of increasing his patrimony. All these are base things, and when a man gives himself to them, he loses his uprightness. And if he does

not raise himself up to desire heavenly goods, he will end up like the bowed woman, absolutely incapable of looking upwards.

*Reason shows us
the right way, but we lack
strength*

The Gospel text goes on to say: “And when Jesus saw her, He called her and said to her, ‘Woman, you are freed from your infirmity.’ And He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight” (Lk 13:12-13).

He called and straightened that woman; He enlightened and helped her. At other times, however, He calls but does not heal. His grace enlightens us without being able to help us because of our faults. In fact, it is not uncommon for us to perceive clearly what we should do without being able to accomplish it. We try at first, but then we falter. Reason shows us the right way, but we lack strength to follow with works.

This is part of the punishment that comes from sin. The gift of grace makes us capable of seeing good, but our actions turn us away from what we had seen. The repetition of a fault ensnares the soul such that it can no

longer resume its upright position. It will try, but it will fall again; and, even though not wishing to, will commit again the fault in which it has voluntarily persisted for a long time.

*“I am utterly bowed
down and prostrate”*

The psalmist described this curvature of ours very well, when he said, symbolizing the whole human race: “I am utterly bowed down and prostrate” (Ps 38:6).

He considered that man, though created to contemplate the light from above, was expelled from Paradise because of his sins. Darkness then began to reign in his soul, making him lose his desire for heavenly things and turn all his attention to the earthly. And suffering to see mankind, to which he belongs, reduced to such a state, the psalmist exclaims, speaking of himself: “I am utterly bowed down and prostrate.”

If, having lost sight of heavenly goods, men would think only of the needs of the flesh, they would undoubtedly be bowed down and humiliated, but not to the utmost extreme. Now, since necessity causes their thoughts to slip from the consideration of heavenly things, and

moreover, they are drawn to forbidden pleasure, they are not merely bowed down, but bowed down to an extreme.

Those who pursue only earthly things are not members of Christ

On this subject, another prophet says of the unclean spirits: “who have said to you, ‘Bow down, that we may pass over’” (cf. Is 51:23).

When the soul aspires to heavenly goods, it remains upright, without the least bending. And the evil spirits, seeing it persevere in its virtue, cannot “pass over” it, that is, sow unclean desires.

They say: “Bow down, that we may pass over” because, if the soul does not bow down to desire earthly things, their wickedness has no power against it. They cannot pass over it. By its inflexibility in applying itself to higher things, such a soul strikes fear in them.

It is we, dear brethren, who make way for the evil spirits when we covet the things of the earth and bow down to seek transitory goods. Therefore, let us be ashamed to covet the things of the earth in such a way. Let us blush with shame for offering the back of our spirit to those adversaries who wish to walk over it.

Moses prohibited hunchbacks from being promoted to the priesthood

He who is bowed down always looks to the earth, and he who seeks earthly things forgets the price at which he was redeemed. Thus is understood the precept of Moses, absolutely forbidding hunchbacks to be promoted to the priesthood (cf. Lev 21:20). Now all of us who have been redeemed by the Blood of Christ have become members of this High Priest.

Hence Peter declares to us: “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood”

(1 Pet 2:9). But he who is a hunchback looks only at the things here below and is excluded from the priesthood; for he who cares only for the things of the earth shows that he is not a member of the High Priest.

Further in this regard, the faithful people were forbidden to eat fish that had no fins, because fish with fins and scales usually jump out of the water. And what does this symbolize but the souls of the elect?

Surely only the souls sustained on earth by the fins of their virtues pass into the body of the Church of Heaven. Due to their desire to attain eternal beatitude, they know the art of leaping out of the water, eagerly soaring to the contemplation of celestial things, although they must soon descend due to the weight of their mortal nature.

Let us consider our curvature with horror

Thus, dear brethren, since we now recognize the goods of the heavenly Homeland, let us consider our curvature with horror. Let us keep in mind

the bowed woman and the fruitless fig tree. Let us remember the evil we have practised and apply fertilizer to the root of our heart, so that by its fertilizing action, even that which repulsed us in earthly life, through penance may one day yield for us the fruit of the reward.

And if we are unable to practise the virtues in all perfection, God himself will rejoice to see us deplore our incapacity. We will give Him pleasure by the simple fact of beginning to do penance for the sins committed. And our weeping will be of short duration, for the eternal joys will have promptly wiped away our passing tears, through Our Lord Jesus Christ who, being God, lives and reigns with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. ✧

Excerpts from:
ST. GREGORY THE GREAT.
Homilies on the Gospels.
Homily XXI,
pronounced in the Basilica of
St. Lawrence the Martyr, 9/6/591:
PL 76, 1228-1232



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He who is bowed down always looks to the earth, and he who seeks earthly things forgets the price at which he was redeemed

Jesus cures the crippled woman - Gospel Book of Otto III,
Bavarian State Library, Munich (Germany)

GOSPEL

Jesus told His disciples this parable: ¹ “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire labourers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ Going out about nine o’clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.’

⁵ So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o’clock, and did likewise. ⁶ Going out about five o’clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷ They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’ ⁸ When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Summon the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’ ⁹ When those who had started about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰ So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. ¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ¹² ‘These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s burden and the heat.’ ¹³ He said to one of them in reply, ‘My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴ Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? ¹⁵ Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?’ ¹⁶ Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Mt 20: 1-16a).



Parable of the vineyard labourers - Freyburg (Germany)

G.Freihalter

Let Us Love God's Generosity!

Nothing is as difficult for human pride as accepting God's gratuitous benevolence, by which He distributes His gifts unequally, being just towards all but especially generous towards some.



Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I – HUMAN PRIDE AND DIVINE GOODNESS

The Gospel for this 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time shows us two completely different perspectives from which we can consider everything throughout our lives: either we allow ourselves to be enlightened by faith, believing in what is beyond the reach of the senses and analysing everything according to God, or we restrict ourselves to concrete realities and are guided by our own criteria.

These two opposing outlooks even influence our understanding of the Creator and the way He relates to the beings He created. If we start from the human point of view, we often believe that the world conceived by God is not the most perfect, because it has the stain of sin. The ideal would be if, for example, only one man had sinned and was cast into hell, in order to reveal the punitive justice of the Omnipotent, but all the rest remained faithful in the time of trial, meriting the eternal reward.

However, an infallible principle of theology teaches us: "If God has done it, it is perfect."

Although He had the possibility of drawing from nothing creatures without any defect, He wanted to constitute a weak humanity subject to error, for in this way He would better manifest His supreme goodness. Although we do not know the proportion between the number of the Blessed and the number of the condemned, we know that in the plan of salvation, mercy far outshines justice.

Now pride makes us want to conquer Heaven by our merits, as if salvation depended exclusively on our good deeds, and so it is hard for us to accept God's gratuitous benevolence towards us. And the difficulty becomes even greater when we see His compassion poured out upon our fellow men. It is easy for us to comprehend why divine justice falls upon someone, but how hard it is to admire and rejoice when the Father of mercy showers with His gifts those who, according to our judgement, are unfit to receive them!

This is one of the main teachings Our Lord transmits in telling His disciples the parable of the workers in the vineyard. While, on the one hand, the magnanimous gesture of the land-

*Pride makes
us want
to conquer
Heaven by
our merits,
and so it is
hard for us to
accept God's
gratuitous
benevolence*

The vinedresser's attitude shows his disinterested goodness, since he was not moved by necessity, but by the desire to help

owner shows how the distribution of divine benefits is independent of human efforts, on the other hand, the envious reaction of the workers illustrates how mistaken we are when we try to analyse the way God treats His children through a naturalistic lens.

II – MERCY THAT IS GRATUITOUS, ABUNDANT AND ANTI-EGALITARIAN

St. Matthew, the only one who records the parable contemplated in this Liturgy, inserts it after the dialogue between Our Lord and the Apostles about the young rich man. After the latter “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (Mt 19:22), the Divine Master made some comments on the generosity asked of the elect, rewarded by God with a hundredfold on this earth and in eternal life (cf. Mt 19:29). Then the Evangelist begins chapter 20 of his account with this parable, in which we also read the third foretelling of the Passion and the episode of the sons of Zebedee beseeching positions of honour in the Kingdom.

This contextual overview allows us to perceive that one of Jesus’ objectives in composing the story was to instil in His disciples the notion of God as the absolute Lord of His gifts, who grants them as He pleases.

Jesus told His disciples this parable:

¹ “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire labourers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.”

It was part of the current agricultural customs in Palestine to admit day labourers at harvest time. They would gather in the marketplace at dawn, waiting for some offer of work. As the day was divided into hours counted from sunrise, the contract was made before dawn, and the harvest or picking began at about six in the morning. Since they were generally poor and needy people, they were paid at sunset on the same day, as prescribed by the Mosaic Law in the Book of Deuteronomy (cf. Dt 24:15).

The scenario described by Our Lord in these verses did not present any novelty to the dis-

ciples, because it entirely corresponded to reality. However, He develops the plot by adding unexpected details, likely to shock His listeners and highlight the figure of the landowner. Thus, the entry of new workers over the course of the day was something unusual, especially at the end of the workday.

Varying degrees of relationship with God

³ “Going out about nine o’clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.’⁵ So they went off. And he went out again around noon, and around three o’clock, and did likewise.”

To the three groups of workers hired between nine o’clock in the morning and three in the afternoon, the landowner did not promise a predetermined wage, but only said that he would pay them “what is just”. This detail supposes a relationship of greater confidence towards the vinedresser on the part of these “idlers”, because they accept the job without further demands or formalities.

⁶ “Going out about five o’clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do



you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷ They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’”

Employers would naturally give preference to the sturdiest, most resourceful and experienced candidates; therefore, these ones whom no one had hired were probably the least skilled. The vinedresser’s attitude, going out in search of people whose collaboration would yield him little or nothing, shows his disinterested goodness, since he does not do so out of necessity, but out of the desire to help.

Applied to the spiritual life, the parable illustrates three different degrees of intimacy of souls with God. While some see Him as a Lord whom they must serve and from whom they expect a reward, others regard Him as a Friend who will repay them in the measure of their fidelity. And there are yet those who consider Him as their Father, obeying Him like children, without expecting compensation. The latter are represented by the workers hired at dusk, to whom the owner makes no mention of a salary, but only sends them into the vineyard.

The egoist feels cheated by the goodness done to others

⁸ “When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Summon the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with

the first.’ ⁹ When those who had started about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage.”

Every nuance of the story is finely tailored, with a clear purpose. The foreman begins to distribute the salary giving precedence to those who had dedicated only one hour. The others, when they see that they receive the full daily rate, immediately begin to make selfish calculations, each one multiplying the value by the hours of service rendered.

¹⁰ “So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. ¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ¹² ‘These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s burden and the heat.’”

In order to emphasize that the governance of all things belongs to the Creator, Our Lord again reverses the order of payment, placing those who had worked all day after those who entered last. The former may have been imagining that they would earn twelve coins, in proportion to the hours of “burden and the heat” endured in the vineyard, but they received only one. Because they were full of self-love, they felt cheated and began to grumble, indignant against the landowner. It is the typical attitude of the envious, who cannot tolerate the gifts that are given to others and, deep down, rebel against God.

Just recompense, abundant mercy

¹³ “He said to one of them in reply, ‘My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴ Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? ¹⁵ Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are

Applied to the spiritual life, the parable illustrates three different degrees of intimacy of souls with God



Parable of the vineyard workers
Codex Aureus of Echternach, National German
Museum, Nuremberg (Germany)

*Our Lord
does not
follow narrow
human
concepts, and
when He
decides to
show mercy,
He does so
abundantly
and freely*

you envious because I am generous?’
¹⁶ Thus, the last will be first, and the
first will be last.”

These words of the landowner, addressed not to all but “to one of them,” correct the erroneous view of the dissenters, pointing out how generosity towards some did not imply injustice against others. Besides emphasizing his rights as a proprietor, free to dispose of his goods as he wished, he draws their attention to what they had received and encourages them to be glad with it. If they, instead of comparing themselves with their fellows, had looked up to the generosity of the employer, they would not only have been satisfied with their own earnings, but would also have experienced the incomparable happiness that only admiration produces.

In interpreting the parable in a spiritual sense, certain authors apply it to the different moments of life when souls are invited to serve God with greater perfection. Thus, some go to “work in the vineyard” at the break of dawn, still in childhood, others enlist at more advanced stages, and there is even a contingent that enters only at the last hour. The Most High always rewards any effort made with the aim of pleasing Him, for He is Justice. But He does not follow narrow human concepts, and when He decides to show mercy, He does so abundantly and freely. Being omnipotent, He can either reciprocate in just measure or give with entire liberality.

Other commentators, however, prefer to associate this passage of the Gospel with salvation history. From this perspective, “the vineyard in which the Lord calls to work is the Church He founded. He invited the Jews to enter it first, not only through His preaching, but also through the ancient patriarchs and prophets, who with their lives and teachings prepared those people to receive the Messiah and take part in the Kingdom He would found on earth. He then called the Gentiles at the last hour, for He came to save and redeem all humanity, and granted them the same privileges as the Jewish people.”¹

In this historical sense, it would not be an exaggeration to say that God’s way of acting with humanity in the present generations manifests a mercy that is even more disconcerting and anti-egalitarian than that portrayed in the parable, for the “later” one arrives, the greater the graces granted.

This is what St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort prophesies about the Saints of the latter times, upon whom Providence will pour out such graces that, if compared with the Saints of the previous period, they will resemble cedars of Lebanon beside small shrubs.²

III – JOY FOR ANOTHER’S SPIRITUAL GOOD

“As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are My ways above your ways and My thoughts above your thoughts” (Is 55:9), says the Lord by the lips of Isaiah in the passage chosen for the first reading this Sunday. The language employed by the prophet imparts an idea of the immensity that separates divine and human cogitations. But the image is an understatement for, in reality, the distance is infinite.

If we are not nourished with special mystical graces, we will never be able to live up to our condition as baptized persons, that is, with an attitude of soul always attentive to the supernatural world. It is a plane so superior to our frailty that we, attracted by concrete things, easily look down, slip and fall. To remain in this elevated state of mind without the help of grace is as impossible as someone trying to walk around all day as in a ballet, touching the ground with only the tips of their toes.

Therefore, it is up to us to combat the tendency to give ourselves over to a practical atheism by which we wish to be guided only by what our senses and reason indicate, without referring to Providence. The result of such a deviation can be seen in today’s world: a Babel of chaos and lies where everything is an invitation to sin because it evolved divorced from God. In fact, it was not under the influence of mystical graces that man invented the airplane, the internet, the extraordinary present-day medical devices and so many other wonders of technology, but by the mere application of his intelligence. If we do not wish to allow ourselves to be taken in by the delirium of sensations offered by this situation, we must turn to the One who “is near to all who call upon Him,” as the Responsorial Psalm reminds us (cf. Ps 145:18), in the certainty that the Lord is found within each one of us. To be heard, we need only recollect ourselves and turn to Him in our interior tabernacle.



Sacred Heart of Jesus - Jesuit Parish, Santander (Spain)

We are all bound to the practice of virtue, by the simple fact of having a soul created and redeemed by God. We must return what belongs to Him, keeping the Commandments and avoiding sin at all cost. However, we would be mistaken if we imagined that Heaven is obtained exclusively by personal effort. The heavenly realities are so far beyond our pure nature that no one could ever gain participation in eternal bliss, were it not for the mercy of the Creator.

However, let us not forget: in the parable, all the workers accepted the landowner's call and dedicated themselves to his service. Accordingly, at the end of the day, each one earned a silver coin. And yet, how many people over the course of history have refused to "work in the vineyard", or have done so in such a negligent way as to receive eternal punishment as payment!

Let us firmly establish in the depths of our souls the conviction that at the end of this period of toil, begun when God called us into His army, we too will be summoned before Him to obtain – or not – the heavenly reward. If we wish to be the object of His magnanimity, let us live with our eyes and hearts fixed on the wonders

of the Kingdom of Heaven, on Jesus and Mary Most Holy, and let us love the goodness that they manifest to each one of Their children in an unequal manner.

Whoever becomes saddened or rebellious in beholding the generosity of Providence poured out upon others commit the sin of envy for another's spiritual good. In this Liturgy, Our Lord invites us to the exact opposite of this: to delight in the good of another, rejoicing in the divine benevolence granted to our brothers. ✧

¹ LEAL, SJ, Juan; DEL PÁRAMO, SJ, Severiano; ALONSO, SJ, José. *La Sagrada Escritura. Texto y comentarios por los profesores de la Compañía de Jesús. Nuevo Testamento. Evangelios*. Madrid: BAC, 1964, v.I, p.211.

² Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *Traité de la vraie dévotion a la Sainte Vierge*, n.47. In: *Œuvres Complètes*. Paris: Du Seuil, 1966, p.512-513.

*God's way
of acting
with
humanity
in the
present
generations
manifests
a mercy
that is
even more
disconcerting*

A Famous, but Unknown Story...

It was the end of the *Belle Époque*,¹ a time marked by the search for the enjoyment of life, of a carefree and leisurely joy, and by great scientific and industrial advances that gave humanity a sense of security, stability and self-sufficiency. However, everything was heading rapidly towards a tragic end: the First World War.

It was within this historical context that the White Star Line shipping company, at the initiative of its president, Joseph Bruce Ismay, completed the construction of the Titanic, whose inaugural voyage, bound for New York, began from the port of Southampton on April 10, 1912.

On that day, the risen sun was especially bright, the sky was clear and a mild breeze was blowing through the city, while the birds seemed to be flying with more vivacity than usual. Everything seemed to augur the success of the largest ocean liner ever built.

It is said that while a distinguished lady of English society, Mrs. Cadwell, watched the porters loading her luggage, she asked one of them:

— Is this ship really unsinkable?

— Yes, madam! – he replied – Not even God can sink it!...

A bold statement... However, those words did not merely represent the opinion of a simple sailor, but reflected the secularist mentality, obsessed with progress, that pervaded English society at the time. The gigantic ship deluded the minds of both those who built it and those who boarded it.

Great and varied social gathering

The Titanic left Southampton carrying more than two thousand passengers, including nobles and millionaires, components of the high society of the time, along with Bruce Ismay himself. Several of them were regulars on the voyages commanded by the renowned Captain Edward Smith, who, at sixty-two years of age, would navigate for the last time at the helm.

Besides the magnates and wealthy folk who constituted the first and second class, there was a third class

aboard, composed of emigrants on their way to the United States full of hope, in the expectation of acquiring a considerable fortune in the New World that would allow them to break free from their labourer status.

More than just a common crossing of the Atlantic, this trip can be considered a great and varied social gathering. On the decks of the modern ship, people of all levels were optimistic about the delightful “sea of dreams” that the illusory world offered them.

Heading heedlessly towards disaster

On Sunday, April 14, the day also dawned serene and sunny. However, at 9am the radio operator received a dispatch from the Caronia, a vessel that was also sailing through that area, warning of the presence of ice on the sea surface. No one, however, gave the matter much importance.

At 1:40pm, a new message was received from the Baltic, also from the White Star Line, warning about num-



By 2am on that dark night, all illusions had vanished. Minutes later, the waters of the Atlantic Ocean engulfed once and for all the proud titan of the seas. With it sank the foolish optimism of an entire generation.



Sr. Antonella Ochipinti, EP

erous icebergs sighted precisely on the route the Titanic was following. The telegrapher dispatched the message to the command room, and the officer in charge sent it to the captain.

As it was lunchtime, Captain Smith chose to finish his meal calmly, after which he headed to the deck in search of the company president, who was taking a stroll. However, the latter, after receiving the message, placed the paper in his pocket and continued his walk.

No one along the entire command chain wanted to trouble himself about the danger. They all preferred to pass it on to a superior or put aside that “annoyance” that threatened to spoil such a pleasant crossing.

It was not long before the SS Amerika and the SS Californian sent new messages to the Titanic, but the radio operator, Jack Philips, as optimistic as all the others, paid them no heed.

The lack of vigilance and shameful disregard that so often precedes great disasters in history was rife among that crew... Their remiss and absurd attitude heralded the inevit-

able tragedy; the collision would not be long in coming.

Later investigations raised the suspicion that the decision not to slow down the vessel or change its course was due to pressure on the captain by the company president, Joseph Bruce Ismay²... Captain Smith’s years of experience made him aware of the danger the icebergs posed in those waters. However, it seemed more important to him to help maintain the prestige of the company by avoiding manoeuvres that would result in the crossing taking longer than expected...

Besides, it was just not plausible to think that such a large, powerful and well-built ship could sink at the very height of an age of success and development.

That night, the captain retired, without giving much importance to the gravity of the situation. As the stars glittered in the dark vault of a moonless sky, the lights in the salons and cabins were gradually being extinguished. In the ship, calm reigned; in the sea, the icebergs loomed menacingly...

Cunning work of the devil

This blindness and consequent inaction in face of such imminent danger are distressing, and they prompt us to ask ourselves what was the reason for this collective “inanity”.

Now, analysing the facts in greater depth, we can perceive in this historical episode the discreet, almost imperceptible presence of the devil, master of using a sagacious and very efficient tactic in his operations.

To better understand it, let us think about how cancer acts on a person. It is a potentially deadly disease, whose main danger lies in the fact that it is, at first, imperceptible. The affected cells silently form tumours in the organism, and when the individual begins to feel its symptoms, the damage has often already become irreversible.

Thus also satan acts. His trick is to influence souls by working discreetly. By the time his presence is perceived, a thousand defects and miseries have already taken root in the soul, making it very difficult to fight them.



The Titanic photographed in
Cobh Harbour, (Ireland), on
11/4/1912

Now, this is not the worst artifice of the infernal enemy. There is an even more harmful way of attacking the children of God: to clothe himself with good appearances! Such are the “ravenous wolves” who disguise themselves as “good sheep”, against whom the Divine Redeemer warns us in the Gospel (cf. Mt 7:15).

On these occasions, evil appears under the veil of supposed virtue in order to be able to undermine its prey without hindrance. Dazzled by the beauty, tenderness and whiteness of the false sheep, victims are unable to discern anything bad or dangerous and allow themselves to be devoured. The warnings given to them are usually of no avail.

Thus, it could be said that the state of mind of the crew and passengers of the Titanic had its origin in a terrible “cancer” called worldliness. Or, perhaps, that they were attacked by a fierce wolf disguised as an innocent sheep, known as human progress.

They saw this treacherous world as a sea of harmless, wonderful and endless pleasures, when, in fact, it is only the transitory battlefield on which our eternal destiny is decided. They relied on advances in science and technology to the point that they considered themselves immune to any disaster, as if our lives were not governed from above by Almighty God. When their illusion dawned on them, it was already too late...

And the inevitable happened...

Around 11:30pm on that seemingly serene moonless night, watchmen Frederick Fleet

and Reginald Lee beheld from the watchtower a sinister image: a gigantic dark block floated only five hundred metres off the bow of the boat! The monstrous obstacle had not been spotted before, because those responsible did not have binoculars...³

Soon three alarm bells rang, and the command post received a warning by phone: “Iceberg just ahead!” The first officer, William McMaster Murdoch, had no time to take any preventive action; all he could do was shout, “Turn off the engines and full left rudder!”

The order was obeyed in all haste, but the obstacle was too close. What seemed impossible became inevitable: the Titanic collided violently with the ice and gradually lost speed until it stopped... It was mortally wounded!

The shipbuilder, Thomas Andrews, accompanied by Captain Smith, hastened to make a survey and immediately acknowledged that

all was lost. The Titanic could continue afloat with three of its sixteen watertight compartments damaged. Stretching the limit, it could possibly withstand having four of them completely flooded. However, the iceberg crashed into the ship so hard and at such an angle that five compartments were hit at once.

The gravity of the situation prompted them to wake up the crew who were not on duty at the time: “Turn out, you fellows; you haven’t half an hour to live. That is from Mr. Andrews. Keep it to yourselves, and let no one know.”⁴

There were, in fact, no bells, no sirens, no general alarms. The news was spread from person to person, asking all passengers to gather on the deck wearing their life jackets.

How did the passengers react?

Inside the ship, the fatal blow was only felt as a slight jolt. It is said that in the smoking room, poker players



Photos: Wikimedia commons

Those on board the Titanic saw this treacherous world as a sea of pleasures, when, in fact, it is only the transitory battlefield on which our eternal destiny is decided

Photographs and drawings depicting different areas of the luxurious Titanic's interior: the reading and writing room, the grand staircase, the gymnasium and pool



Many refused to enter the boats! They felt much safer on the Titanic and did not believe in the imminent sinking

At left, the iceberg considered to be the cause of the shipwreck, photographed from the SS Prinz Adalbert; at right, the last lifeboat to be lowered from the Titanic, photographed by a passenger on the ship Carpathia

were still awake at this hour. They felt a slight tremor and saw a mountain of ice over twenty metres high glide by the windows. However, the night seemed beautiful and calm to them. They never bothered to leave the room or ask for information. After all, they were on the Titanic, the great transatlantic liner that “not even God could sink”...

Little by little, reality became undeniable. While most people slept, the sea flooded the ship. In a few minutes, two and a half metres of water covered the boiler room. Not even that could dispel the absurd optimism of most passengers, and many still wondered if they were really sinking... As the staff woke them up and helped them to don their life jackets, some smiled, thinking the measure excessive.

At half past midnight, the order was given: “Women and children to the lifeboats.” Fifteen minutes later, the first of them was lowered to the sea. All in all, the evacuation was carried out slowly and in a disorganized manner.

Several of the sailors did not even know how to launch the lifeboats properly, because they had never been trained to react in case of emergency...

Due to the lack of expertise of those responsible, only four of the twenty boats available were loaded to more than seventy percent of their capacity.

Besides the incompetence of the crew, another factor contributed to the failure of the operation: many passengers refused to enter the boats! They felt much safer on the Titanic and did not believe in the imminent sinking. Many women, who would have been the first to evacuate the ship, refused to do so because they considered it impossible that the ship would sink.

At first, there was no sign of panic among the passengers. One of the reasons for this is the fact that the ship’s own crew made them believe that it was all just a training exercise... Moreover, the orchestra kept playing cheerful melodies in order to keep everyone calm.

To what extent would that general obstinacy persist, which had already surpassed all imaginable limits?

Finally, reality takes hold...!

While many hesitated or even refused to believe, the Titanic’s career was coming to its close. It would soon be buried in the waters.

At two o’clock in the morning, the final moment approached, of the slow and dramatic descent of the titan of the seas to the depths of the Atlantic. Only then, when faced with the seriousness of death, were the ridiculous illusions of the most recalcitrant broken and their worldly trust dashed. Some remembered God and began to pray. Others ran wildly through the corridors and halls of the ship, given over to despair.

At 2:17am, all the lights on the ship were out. Amidst the darkness, it was possible to see people throwing themselves from every side into the icy sea as a final attempt to save themselves.

At 2:20am on the fifteenth of April, the ocean waters closed forever upon the proud ship and with it sank the foolish optimism of an entire generation. The sinking of the Titanic brought to light, in some way, the deception of this atheistic and hedonistic way of life.

Today’s world: a “new Titanic”

Only six hundred and sixty of the more than two thousand people who boarded in Southampton survived the shipwreck. But, alas! How many

opportunities were there to avoid or mitigate such a great catastrophe!

If the captains had given real importance to the warning messages about the icebergs received on Sunday... If binoculars had been available among the equipment of the lookout, they would have been able to spot that huge block of ice one minute earlier... If the crew had been trained to act correctly in that emergency... If the passengers had believed in the imminent danger... How many of those 1,500 lost lives could have been saved!

Now, who knows if, as happened millennia ago at the Tower of Babel, God did not allow man, in the sinking of the Titanic, to be the victim of his own pride? Did He not consent to this failure as a deserved punishment for man's arrogance at the beginning of the century, daring to defy the Creator with his scientific knowledge?

Analogies are not lacking also between our days and the sinking of the mighty ship. Faced with the moral, social and intellectual decadence in which we live immersed, faced with increasingly more frequent natural disasters, whether provoked by humans or not, faced with pandemics and mysterious diseases that threaten the entire world, modern man insists on being turned in on himself.

And "this undying optimism, which does not change in the face of the most evident manifestations that things are going badly, indicates insensitivity to the plans of Providence, and ultimately a divorce between men and God."⁵

Humanity has already received countless warnings about the danger that threatens it. Chief among them was the one given by Mary Most Holy herself at Fatima, a few years after

the historical episode we have just recalled. Was She heeded by those who call themselves her children? Or did people judge, as has so often happened throughout history, that the "powerful ship" of the world is "unsinkable" as the Titanic was supposed to be?

What is certain is that, since the expulsion of our first parents from Paradise, God declared that Our Lady's lineage would overcome that of the serpent. And so Our Lady promised: "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph!"

Therefore, let neither the solidity of our ship concern us, nor the violence of the waves that shake it in the midst of victory, nor yet the treacherous icebergs. Whatever difficulties we encounter along the way, Mary Most Holy's promise guarantees the success of the voyage. ✧



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How many opportunities were there to avoid or mitigate such a great catastrophe!

The Sinking of the Titanic - Engraving by Willy Stöwer

¹ Period between 1890 and 1914, just before the First World War, characterized by economic and cultural prosperity.

² Cf. VALLS SOLER, Xavier. *Titanic: el naufragio del orgullo*. In: www.lavanguardia.com.

³ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁴ UNITED STATES SENATE INQUIRY. *Testimony of Samuel Hemming*, April 25, 1912. In: www.titanicinquiry.org

⁵ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Conference*. São Paulo, July 25, 1969.

A Kneeler, an Altar and a Confessional

Why is it that St. Padre Pio attracted and still attracts so many souls? Perhaps because his life was entirely dedicated to prayer, to the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice and the administration of the Sacrament of Penance.



Fr. Fernando Néstor Gioia, EP

Pietrelcina is a small town in southern Italy, surrounded by fertile but rocky land. Even today, walking through its narrow, unevenly surfaced streets, one can feel the atmosphere of bygone days.

On May 25, 1887, this obscure locale became the birthplace of a boy, baptized by the name of Francis, whose fame, over the years, was to spread far and wide.

He would be the “martyr” of the confessional, who had the gift of reading consciences and spent ten to fifteen hours a day administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation; the persecuted priest, who for a little over two years was forbidden to celebrate his daily Mass in public, to hear Confessions or even to give spiritual advice to those who requested it; the religious who kept obedient silence in that situation; the Capuchin friar sought by crowds that flocked from all over the world: St. Pio of Pietrelcina.

To all this can be added the fact that he bore in his hands, feet and side the clear, supernatural and painful sign of the stigmata, which marked his life and apostolate for fifty years.

“I am only a poor friar who prays”

Pope Paul VI commented on this monk with the stigmata, who astonished and still amazes the whole world:

“Look what fame Padre Pio had! [...] But why? [...] Because he cele-

brated Mass humbly, heard Confessions from morning till night, and was a visible representative of the stigmata of Our Lord. He was a man of prayer and suffering.”¹

One of his biographers sums up his existence in this way: “a kneeler, an altar and a confessional.”² These three words indicate the places where he spent most of his days, dedicated to prayer, to the celebration of Holy Mass and to attending to the thousands of penitents who knelt to ask forgiveness, as well as to gain some insight on the direction of their lives.

Padre Pio prayed at every moment and everywhere. This was the source from which he drew his strength. “What do these people want from me? I am just a poor friar who prays,” he said of himself.

He lived of the Mass and for the Mass

The Masses celebrated by Padre Pio were a wonderful spectacle of piety and faith. He would go up to the altar without the gloves that normally covered the stigmata of his hands, and those who were able to contemplate him on those occasions never forgot it. The faithful crowded at the entrance



He dedicated ten to fifteen hours a day to administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation

St. Pio hearing Confessions in San Giovanni Rotondo, around the year 1960



It is said that Padre Pio lived of the Mass and for the Mass

St. Pio celebrating the Holy Mass - Museum of Padre Pio, Pietrelcina (Italy);
on following page, St. Padre Pio - Chapel of Alcalá de Henares University (Spain)

of the church two hours before the beginning of the Holy Sacrifice, in the hope of getting front row seats; everyone left having grown in devotion.

It is said that Padre Pio lived of the Mass and for the Mass. In this regard, in the 1950s the French Ambassador to the Holy See declared: "Never in my life have I attended so disconcerting and yet so simple a celebration. [...] The Mass acquired unknown proportions and became an absolutely supernatural act."³

More than to listen to his homilies, the faithful flocked to participate in the celebration, which was, in itself, a preaching. Everyone wanted to have contact with him. On his way to the altar or to the confessional, they tried to touch him, they crowded around him, they told him their sorrows, and they asked for guidance.

When, in September 1916, he arrived at San Giovanni Rotondo—called the "convent of desolation", by a Capuchin of the time owing to the scarcity of the faithful who then frequented its church—no one could have imagined that, years later, crowds would gather there, avid to attend its Masses and

make their Confession. They longed to receive spiritual advice, solve family problems, or even to be the object of a miracle.

"Martyr" of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The testimonies of penitents who confessed to Padre Pio reveal how severe he was with those who were neither convinced of the gravity of their sin nor determined to abandon it. At the same time, he showed himself to be paternal, understanding and encouraging with those who repented of their weaknesses.

Some of those who came to him were met with attitudes that they may have found disconcerting, but this did not discourage them: they invariably returned to him. "It is a sin, it is a sin" – he used to repeat to those who received the Sacrament of Reconciliation – "If you do not want to stop offending God, what are you doing here?"

Padre Pio's penitents came not only from nearby towns, but also from all over Italy and even abroad. As their number kept increasing, it was

decided to issue numbers and make a schedule. On some days, the time he devoted to hearing Confessions would extend to sixteen hours! In 1967, he confessed about fifteen thousand women and ten thousand men, about seventy people a day.

"I am besieged by a multitude of souls thirsting for Jesus," he commented to his companions. "They don't leave me one free moment." The gift of reading consciences and probing hearts made him famous: "I know them inside and out," he acknowledged. When approached by those who had not confessed for a long time, he reminded them of their forgotten sins.

Padre Pio spent a great part of his life in the confessional, listening to human miseries and sorrows with admirable patience. He can be considered a "martyr" of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. "I feel fine, but I am overwhelmed with hundreds and thousands of Confessions that I hear day and night. I do not have an instant for myself," he once declared.

Sent by God to convert the people

Exhausted by his generous giving of self to his brethren, the Capuchin of the stigmata expired in the early hours of September 23, 1968, with a serene face and a rosary in his hands. He was eighty-one years old.

Benedict XV, the Pope who ruled the Church when the fame of Padre Pio began to spread throughout Italy, described him as "a truly extraordinary man, one of those whom God sends from time to time to the earth to convert the people."⁴

On the day of his canonization, St. John Paul II said: "Padre Pio was a generous dispenser of divine mercy, making himself available to all by welcoming them, by spiritual direction and, especially, by the administration of the Sacrament of Penance."⁵ ✧

O Holy and Salutary Thought!

Remember often the presence of your Guardian Angel. Try to see him with the eyes of your soul; thank him, implore him, and respect him. Have constant fear of offending the purity of his gaze.

St. Pio of Pietrelcina

Raphaela, you do not know how consoling it is to realize that we are always under the protection of a heavenly spirit, who does not abandon us, even – and this is admirable – in those moments when we displease God! And how sweet this truth is for the Christian soul!

Indeed, what can instil fear in the soul that is dedicated to loving Jesus, while always having at its side such a noble warrior? Or is it possible that he was not one of those who fought in Paradise with St. Michael the Archangel to defend God's honour against satan and all the rebellious spirits, taking them to their final defeat and confining them to hell?

Be assured, then, that he is still powerful against satan and his messengers. His charity has not diminished and he will never stop defending us. Adopt the good habit of always thinking of him. Close to us is a heavenly spirit who, from the cradle to the grave, does not leave our side for a single moment. He guides and protects us as a friend and brother, always able to console us, especially in the saddest moments.

O Raphaela, understand that this good Angel prays for everyone, and offers to God all the good works accomplished by your holy and pure desires. In those moments when you seem to be alone and helpless, do not regret that you do not have a friendly soul to whom you can open yourself and confide your sorrows. Please do not forget this invisible companion, always ready to listen and console.



O delightful intimacy, O blessed company! Ah, if only all men could understand and appreciate this great gift that God, in the excess of His love, has given us through this heavenly spirit!

Remember his presence often. Try to see him with the eyes of your soul; thank him, and implore him. He is so kind and sensitive... respect him. Have constant fear of offending the purity of his gaze.

Invoke your Guardian Angel habitually, this Angel benefactor. Repeat frequently the beautiful prayer: "O Angel of God my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen."

How great will be your consolation, my dear Raphaela, when, at the moment of death, your soul sees this good Angel who has accompanied you throughout your life and surrounded you with maternal care! May this sweet thought make you love the Cross of Jesus more and more, just as the good Angel wishes! And may the longing to see this inseparable lifelong friend enkindle in you that charity that urges you to quickly leave this body.

O, how holy and salutary is the thought of seeing this good Angel of ours!" ✧

Carta a Rafaela Cerase,
apud: PREZIUSO, Gennaro. *Padre Pio.*
2.ed. Buenos Aires: Ciudad Nueva, 2011, p.218-219

¹ ST. PAUL VI. *Audience for the Superiors of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins*, 20/2/1971.

² DE RIPABOTTONI, OFM Cap, Alejandro. *Padre Pio de*

Pietrelcina. Perfil biográfico. San Giovanni Rotondo: Padre Pio da Pietrelcina, 2018, p.172.

³ D'ORMESSON, Wladimir, apud BOUFLET, Joachim.

Padre Pio – De la condena del Santo Oficio al esplendor de la verdad. Bogotá: Paulus, 2010, p.292.

⁴ DE RIPABOTTONI, op. cit., p.81.

⁵ ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Homily for the canonization of Padre Pio de Pietrelcina*, 16/6/2002.

Apollos: Who Was He?



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The few allusions that Scripture makes to this mysterious figure, combined with the commentaries and inferences of the exegetes, reveal to us a personality full of humility, unpretentiousness and faith.



Marcelo Soares

The time when the figure of Apollos emerges in the Acts of the Apostles probably coincides with the end of the year 52, or the beginning of 53, a phase of great expansion for the Church. Although not long after the death of our Lord Jesus Christ – less than twenty years – Christian communities could already be found scattered throughout the Mediterranean region and even beyond!

St. Peter, the first Pope, had moved to Rome about a decade prior. In that same period, St. Paul began the last of his three apostolic journeys. He left the city of Antioch – the “headquarters” from which he used to begin his journeys – and travelled “from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples” (Acts 18:23).

St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, tells us of the epopees of these two men, pillars of the Church. However, in the eighteenth chapter of his

work, he interrupts the narration, to fix his gaze on another place...

First mention of Apollos

The author of the Acts turns to the port city of Ephesus, located a short distance from where the Apostle was, and also home to a Christian community. St. Paul had been there not long before, and had left two great friends and disciples of his there, the couple Priscilla and Aquila.

It is in Ephesus that a personage appears who attracts attention: “Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:24-25).

In Alexandria, a coastal city of Egypt close to Israel, St. Mark had founded a community, still in its in-

fancy. Apollos was rightly supposed to be just a catechumen, having received only John’s baptism, a public invitation to penance and preparation for true Christian Baptism.¹

Apollos was a fearless man. He began to preach boldly in the synagogue, and the orthodoxy of his doctrine – although incomplete – coupled with the courage with which he spoke, made him an attraction in the city. Priscilla and Aquila, hearing of this unusual figure, decided to attend one of his discourses and were favourably impressed: “when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26).

Here the sacred text reveals a beautiful aspect of Apollo’s personality: humility. Even though he was an extremely eloquent man and well versed in the Scriptures, he did not hesitate to place himself, like a child, in the school of those disciples. It is likely that Apollos was

promptly baptized, perhaps by Aquila himself.

Regarding this attitude of Apollos, Msgr. Gaume reflects: “God blessed this disposition, as He always blesses humble souls.”² In fact, Apollos was of enormous benefit to the community of Ephesus. However, he felt inspired to preach in another city, where one more group of Christians had been formed: Corinth.

In view of this impetus of grace, “the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him” (Acts 18:27). Apollos immediately departed for his destination, where great trials awaited him...

Fruitful apostolate in Corinth

Corinth was one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire. Located in the Isthmus connecting Peloponnese to the continent, it boasted two ports that provided it with bustling commercial activity. Scholars place the estimated number of its inhabitants between one and two hundred thousand!

This was a considerable population for that epoch.³ However, such prosperity, combined with the accentuated circulation of travellers, conspired to create an atmosphere of extreme moral degradation there. “Corinth

was, so to speak, the capital of lust in the Mediterranean world.”⁴

Nevertheless, the Apostle St. Paul had founded one of his largest communities in that city, between the years 50 and 51, and had remained there for at least a year and a half (cf. Acts 18:11). Throughout this period, he faced harsh suffering and strong opposition from the Jews who lived there. His troubles reached such an extreme that Our Lord himself appeared to him to encourage him: “Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10).

This was the setting that Apollos encountered, almost a year after St. Paul’s departure.⁵ However, none

Apollos was of enormous benefit to the community of Ephesus. However, he felt inspired to preach in another city

of this discouraged that dauntless preacher: “he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus” (Acts 18:27-28).

Well-educated in the truths of the Gospel, Apollos preached in Corinth with the same success that he had achieved in Ephesus, becoming the Bishop of that city.⁶

Absurd dispute

In fact, his popularity among the faithful of Corinth grew to such an extent that it ended up bringing about a kind of division: some claimed to belong to Peter, others to Paul, others to Apollos, and still others to Christ...

This absurd attitude had several causes, the first of which was the superficiality of the Corinthians themselves. How could they have equated the Apostles with Our Lord, to the point where their authority was equal to His? It is not easy to come up with an answer.

The same superficiality led the Corinthians, upon seeing the great eloquence of Apollos, to consider him superior to St. Paul, who preached in a much simpler manner and without employing the resources of rhetoric (cf. 1 Cor 2:1-5).



Photos: Francisco Lecaros

Ruins of ancient Ephesus (Turkey); previous page, illumination from the Menologion of Basil II representing some of the 70 disciples, Apollos among them (second from left)

As if this were not enough, we find an external factor: the creation of factions among the Corinthians was probably also inspired by certain “converted” Jews who arrived in the city shortly after Apollos and were looking for pretexts to attack St. Paul and his title of Apostle (cf. 2 Cor 10:9-10; 11:5-7; 12:11-13). The malice of these infiltrators is well expressed in the Second Letter to the Corinthians, in which they are called “false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (11:13).

It should be observed that Apollos was not at fault in the dispute that had developed. If there had been any bad intention in his apostolate, we can be sure that St. Paul – a man of a remarkably fiery, uncompromising and sincere character – would have censured him, as had been his approach even with St. Peter (cf. Gal 2:11). However, we see the opposite: all references to Apollos in the Pauline letters show great esteem and trust.

In any case, the parties were formed and the situation in Corinth became untenable. It was then that Apollos decided to leave the city to meet St. Paul in Ephesus.⁷

Encounter with St. Paul

Upon meeting with the Apostle, Apollos reported the entire division that the community of Corinth was suffering.⁸ His account was corroborated by that of several other disciples.

In view of this, St. Paul decides to write his First Letter to the Corinthians, in which, on the one hand, he rebukes them for creating factions and, on the other, he shows how Apollos was his collaborator in preaching the Gospel:

“For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos,’ are you not merely men? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor

he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (3:4-7).

The Apostle’s humility, added to his desire to eliminate the divisions among the Corinthians, moves him to declare that his work was worth nothing. In fact, without the help of grace, no apostolate bears real fruit.

However, to be an instrument in God’s hands to proclaim the Gospel is an immense glory. Great as well is the glory of being a co-operator of the great Doctor of the Gentiles in his preaching. In this way, Apollos had the outstanding merit of watering the blessed seed that Paul had planted.

In another passage of the same letter, we find even more eloquent details: “As for our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brethren, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity” (16:12).

This passage shows, in the first place, the confidence that St. Paul had in Apollos. In the same letter in which he criticizes the division pro-

*Upon hearing
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The Gulf of Salonika and the Isthmus of Corinth viewed from Acrocorinth

George E. Koronaios

¹ Cf. GAUME, Jean-Joseph. *Biographies Évangéliques*. Paris: Gaume e C^e, 1893, v.II, p.197.

² Idem, ibidem.

³ This total only includes free men. It is estimated that there were also close to four hun-

dred thousand slaves in Corinth (cf. LEAL, SJ, Juan et al. *La Sagrada Escritura. Texto y comentario por profesores de la Compañía de Jesús. Nuevo Testamento. Hechos de los Apóstoles y Cartas de San Pablo*. 2.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1965, v.II, p.330). The Bible of the

University of Navarra speaks of one hundred thousand inhabitants, without mentioning slaves (cf. SAGRADA BIBLIA. *Nuevo Testamento*. Pamplona: EUNSA, 2004, p.963).

⁴ TURRADO, Lorenzo. *Biblia Comentada. Hechos de los*

Apóstoles y Epístola a los Romanos. 2.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1975, v.VIa, p.183.

⁵ Cf. TURRADO, Lorenzo. *Biblia Comentada. Epístolas paulinas*. 2.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1975, v.VIb, p.3.

duced around his person, he states that he authorized Apollos' visit to Corinth and, furthermore, *strongly urged him* to return. However, Apollos did not want to divert attention from what was most important: Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We can conclude that the Bishop of Corinth accepted with veneration the superiority of Paul, whom Our Lord himself had chosen to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Apollos recognized himself as a mere instructor, whereas the father of the community of Corinth was *St. Paul*. This truth is also mentioned in the letter, shortly after the rebuke regarding the divisions (cf. 1 Cor 4:15-16).

And it is for these reasons that Apollos, as an example of humility, does not want to return to Corinth.

Once again immersed in mystery

After these episodes, the figure of the eloquent Alexandrian once again vanishes from sight. Did he return to Corinth together with St. Paul in the year 57? It is possible, but we do not have any documents that offer assurance on this point.

The next trace of Apollo appears only at a much later date, when the end of St. Paul's life was approaching. It is the last mention of him in Holy Scripture, found in the Letter to Titus: "Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing" (3:13).

Titus was the first Bishop of Crete and, at the time, resided on that island.⁹ St. Paul writes to him to ensure that Apollos and Zenas – of



Francisco Lecaros

St. Paul preaching in the Areopagus, by Libório Guerini - Cathedral of Faro (Portugal)

the latter nothing else is known – are well supported on their journey. Once again, we see the Apostle's esteem for his eloquent collaborator.

It seems that both Apollos and Zenas were with Paul at the time, and were to make some journey by way of Crete, perhaps back to Alexandria.¹⁰

And here, the ardent and eloquent preacher, disciple and assistant to the Apostle St. Paul, is once again immersed in mystery. Did he return once more to Corinth to care for his flock? Or did he, already advanced in years, stay until the end of his days in Alexandria? Why has he not been officially awarded the title of Saint by the Church?

Such questions remain unanswered for the time being...

*Apollos had
the outstanding
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had planted*

However, the little we do know about this figure, whose name deserved to appear in the Sacred Books, already reveals to us an example of humility, unpretentiousness and faith, which the Holy Spirit wanted to grant the Church until the end of time. ✧

⁶ Cf. DIDYMUS THE BLIND. Fragments of the First Letter to the Corinthians. In: BRAY, Gerald (Dir.). *La Biblia comentada por los Padres de la Iglesia. Nuevo Testamento*. Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2001, v.VII, p.264. Although Didymus lived almost three

centuries after Apollos, his testimony is of considerable importance because he was a native of Alexandria, and therefore his fellow countryman. Moreover, there are no statements in the New Testament or in Eusebius of Caesarea which contradict this fact.

⁷ It is impossible to establish the precise date on which Apollos left Corinth, however, his departure was not after the year 57, for it was in this year that St. Paul left Ephesus (cf. TURRADO, *Biblia Comentada. Epístolas paulinas*, op. cit., p.4-5).

⁸ Cf. Idem, p.5.

⁹ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. *Historia Eclesiástica*. L.III, c.4, n.5. Madrid: BAC, 2008, p.124.

¹⁰ TURRADO, *Biblia Comentada. Epístolas paulinas*, op. cit., p.424.

Blessed the Day that Saw Her Birth!

The sunrise is but a pale image of the resplendent dawn signified by Mary Most Holy's appearance on this earth. Blessed the moment when the virginal creature destined to be the Mother of the Saviour came into the world!



Francisco Lecaros



Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

The birth of Our Lady brought to humanity something hitherto unknown: a creature free of any stain, a lily of incomparable beauty that was to gladden the angelic choirs and the whole earth. In the midst of the exile of the corrupt human race, an immaculate being appeared, conceived without original sin.

She brought with Her all the natural riches befitting a woman. God gave her a most precious personality and her presence among men represented, also on this account, a truly incalculable treasure.

Now, if we add to the natural gifts the immeasurable treasures of grace that accompanied Her – the greatest ever granted to anyone by Our Lord God – we can gather the enormous significance of her advent in the world. Sunrise is a pale reality in comparison with the resplendent dawn signified by the appearance of Mary Most Holy on this earth!

The most solemn enthronement of a king or a queen, or the natural phenomena of the greatest magnitude are as nothing compared to the

birth of the Virgin. At that blessed moment, certainly hailed by the joy of all the Angels of Heaven, we may speculate that upright souls scattered throughout the world felt an unusual surge of jubilation. And this sentiment could well be expressed by a paraphrase of Job's words:

"Blessed the day that saw Our Lady's birth, blessed are the stars that looked upon Her when She was little, blessed is the moment when the virginal creature destined to be the Mother of the Saviour came into the world!"

Her coming into the world was the beginning of our redemption

If it is possible to say that the redemption of humanity began with the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same can be said, respecting due proportions, regarding the Nativity of Our Lady. For everything that the Saviour brought us began with the One who would give Him to the world.

The hopes for salvation, indulgence, reconciliation, pardon and mercy that were opened to human-

ity on that blessed day when Mary was born in this land of exile are thus understood. A happy and magnificent moment, it marked the beginning of the unfathomably perfect, pure and faithful existence of what was destined to be the greatest glory of all time for the human race, inferior only to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God.

Many theologians maintain that, having been conceived without original sin, Our Lady was endowed with the use of reason from the very first moment of her being. In the womb of St. Anne, where she lived as in a tabernacle, She would therefore already have had the loftiest and most sublime thoughts.

A parallel can be drawn with what Sacred Scripture tells of St. John the Baptist. He, who had been conceived in original sin, when he heard the voice of Our Lady greeting St. Elizabeth, trembled with joy in his mother's womb.

Therefore, it is possible that the Blessed Virgin, with the sublime knowledge She received by the grace of God, began at once, in her moth-

er's womb, to ask for the coming of the Messiah, and that in her soul She formed the lofty intention of one day becoming the servant of the Redeemer's Mother.

In any case, her mere presence on earth was a source of grace for those who approached Her and St. Anne, and it would be even more so after her birth. If from Our Lord's tunic, as the Gospel tells us, healing powers radiated to those who touched it, how much more from the Mother of God, Chosen Vessel!

Newly-born, and already victorious over the devil

If the coming of the Saviour defeated evil in mankind, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin was accompanied with the light that marked the beginning of the victory of good and the crushing of the devil. Even he realized that something of his sceptre had been irreparably broken. Our Lady was beginning to influence the destiny of humanity.

The world of that time had sunk into the most radical paganism, in a situation very similar to that of our days: vice reigned, the most diverse forms of idolatry dominated the earth, and decadence threatened the Jewish religion itself, a harbinger of Catholicism. Everywhere, error and the devil were victorious.

But at the moment decreed by God in His mercy, He demolished the wall of evil, bringing Our Lady into the world. From the root of Jesse

blossomed the divine lily, Our Lord Jesus Christ. With His birth began the irreversible destruction of satan's reign.

The "birth" of Mary in our spiritual life

Our Lady's first triumph over evil brings to mind another reflection.

How often in our spiritual life we find ourselves immersed in the struggle against temptations, writhing and reeling in difficulties! And we have no idea when the blessed day will come when a great grace, an outstanding favour, will put an end to our torments and struggles, finally affording us great progress in the practice of virtue.

At that moment there will be a kind of birth of the Blessed Virgin in our souls. She will arise amid the darkness of the greatest trials, overcoming at the very outset the difficulties that we have been facing. She will rise up like a dawn in our existence, representing in our spiritual life a role hitherto unknown to us.

She will arise amid the darkness of the greatest trials, overcoming at the very outset the difficulties that we have been facing



Nativity of the Virgin, by Giotto di Bondone - Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padua (Italy); previous page, Angels venerating the new-born Child Mary - St. Peter's Cathedral, Condom (France)

Gustavo Kralj

This thought should fill us with joy and hope, giving us the certainty that Our Lady will never abandon us. In the most difficult hours, She, as it were, bursts into our midst, solving our problems, alleviating our sorrows and giving us the combativeness and courage necessary to fulfil our duty completely, however arduous it may be. The greatest consolation She brings us is precisely this strengthening of our will, which allows us to undertake the fight against the enemies of our salvation.

Dawn in the storyline of history

Our Lady also gives us the strength to become zealous children of the Church and defenders of the Catholic religion. There is historical evidence to affirm that all the great souls who have fought against the various heresies over the centuries were especially raised up by Her. This is what the coat of arms of the Claretians so beautifully suggests. In addition to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, it also bears St. Michael the Archangel and the motto: "Her children rose up and called Her Blessed."

Is not this rising up of the Blessed Virgin's devotees to glorify Her another a manner of her being born, like a magnificent dawn in the storyline of history?

Thus, the true children of Our Lady must desire and ask of Her the grace to be indomitable and implacable against the devil and his henchmen who, in our days, seek to defile the glory of the immortal Church of Christ. ✧

*Taken, with slight adaptations,
from "Dr. Plinio" magazine.
São Paulo.
Year II. N.18 (Sept., 1999);
p.13-15*

The Most Holy Name of Mary

Seek a name for Our Lady that can replace "Mary" and you will not find it. When we glorify this name, we exalt the most profound significance of her person.

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

The considerations about the name of Mary that we will make today should begin by examining what a person's name means.

Images of God's perfection

We know from Sacred Scripture (Gn 2:18-20) that God made all the created animals file before Adam, and he, after observing each one, gave them a name that defined their being and corresponded to the deepest meaning of their nature.

Any animal, however small, is an extremely rich being, because it is alive, moves by itself and, more than

that, reflects aspects of God's infinite perfection.

Take, for example, the eagle. It is proper to this splendid bird to it to display its claws, its great wings, its power and its impetus. However, these attributes symbolize on the physical plane a certain quality of God that its anatomy and physiology combine to express.

Adam, knowing and interpreting these qualities, summed up in the word "eagle" the symbolism of this perfection of the Creator. And thus he did with all the other animals, whose name represents the deepest meaning of this reflection of a specific aspect of God.



Bald Eagle photographed in the Toronto area

*To each animal,
Adam gave a
name that defined
its being and
corresponded to the
deepest meaning
of its nature*



Sacred Heart of Jesus - Mount Carmel House, Caieiras (SP)

By exalting the name of Mary we give glory to God

If this is the case with animals, with greater reason it is so with Our Lady.

Conceived without original sin, She was called Mary because in Her all the qualities proper to the one destined to be the Mother of the Word of God were harmonized in a supreme degree. Therefore, this name means, in a mysterious way, all the infinitely perfect aspects of God which She represents in such a special way.

It follows that when we exalt the name of Mary, we glorify that most profound significance of her person, and we also glorify God himself in a magnificent way by praising Him in the figure of His most beloved Mother.

Perfect names for Jesus and Mary

Finally, it is fitting to emphasize the wonderful and unfathomable relationship that exists between the name and the person as applied to Jesus and Mary.

Would there be any other name on the face of the earth that could be given to Our Lord? Although, as stated, the question is somewhat unfathomable, from my point of view He could only be called Jesus. Let us imagine that He received one of the names consecrated by great Saints, such as Francis, Anthony, John... They would not fit. His name is Jesus!

The same can be said of Our Lady. Seek a name that can replace hers and you will not find it.

The names of Jesus and Mary are mysteriously linked to the deepest sense of the human nature of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. Together they constitute a beautiful ensemble and when, at the end of a letter, we sign “in Jesu et Maria” — “in Jesus and Mary”, we perceive such an affinity between these two names that it evokes the perfect harmony between two wonderful musical notes.

Reason for the feast of the name of Mary

All this helps us to better understand the reasons that led the Church

The names of Jesus and Mary are mysteriously linked to the deepest sense of the human nature of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother



Immaculate Heart of Mary - Convent of St. Clare, Guernica (Spain)

to institute a liturgical feast for the Most Sacred Name of Jesus, celebrated in January, and another for the Most Holy Name of Mary, on September 12.

As the name is a symbol and definition of the one who possesses it, when the Incarnate Word considers in himself the union of the two natures in one person, or when the Eternal Father or the Divine Holy Spirit consider this union in the Son, the name “Jesus” appears to Them. And when they contemplate Our Lady, the name “Mary” comes to Them. ✧

Taken, with slight adaptations, from “Dr. Plinio” magazine.

São Paulo.

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ST. TERESA MARGARET REDI

Intimate Friend of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Those who seek to please God without reservation, at all times and in every situation, draw upon themselves the divine gaze and receive from the Sacred Heart of Jesus the greatest affection and care.



Sr. Daniela Ayau, EP

Reproduction



Imagine that entering the library of a monastery, we go to the hagiography section and find a book entitled *The Friends of God*. It is a mysterious work, written by angelic hands, which presents history to us from the only point of view from which any fact is worth considering: God's perspective.

This precious book summarizes the narration of the deeds – great and tragic, common and extraordinary, glorious and terrible – of souls who have become exemplars of sanctity before Heaven and all humanity.

Taking the volume into our hands, we are enchanted in the very first chapter by the innocent candour and prophetic fortitude of the little shepherds of Fatima, the seers of La Salette and the shepherdess of Masabielle, who received the grace to contemplate the Holy Mother of God and to hear from Her words that would chart the course for future centuries.

Leafing through the pages, we thrill with enthusiasm at the call of figures like St. Ferdinand of Castile, St. Louis IX and St. Joan of Arc, who shone in the firmament of Christianity more for the splendour of their soul than for the flashing of their swords in defence of their homeland and, above all, of the Faith. The integrity with which they wielded the sword imparted to them the mission of guiding whole nations in the light of the Church's teachings, and the Church, in gratitude, proclaimed them as models of holiness.

In subsequent chapters, we hearken to the echoes of the preaching of the *Poverello* of Assisi, exhorting the Middle Ages to embrace poverty in a complete rejection of worldliness; we hear the “barking” of the “Lord's hound”, the great St. Dominic de Guzman, who fearlessly advances upon the heresiarchs who attack Catholic doctrine; we are even

able to savour a little of the impeccable logic of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

We continue to page through our wonderful book until, almost at the end, we come across a title that strikes our attention: “The Lord's closest friends.” This chapter deals with a certain class of souls about whom there would be much and almost nothing to say, for while their heroic virtue earned them the honour of the altars, the beauty of their lives shone only before God.

In an eloquent reference, the author cites the famous motto of the Spanish Requetés – “*Before God, there are no anonymous heroes*” – and briefly sketches the earthly journey of St. Rafael Arnáiz, St. Bruno and many others. Then, drawn by a sudden attraction, our eyes are riveted to the following title: “The Saint Hidden with Christ in God: St. Teresa Margaret REDI.”¹

The question that comes to our mind at this point in our imagined

reading is not so much “what great thing did she accomplish?”, but rather “what did she do to achieve such intimacy with God?”

Pious formation under paternal guidance

On July 15, 1747, the small and beautiful city of Arezzo was the setting for the birth of the second of Ignatius Redi and Camilla Balatti's thirteen children. At the baptismal font she received the name Anne-Marie.

The eminent Balatti family belonged to the nobility of the city of Siena, and Ignatius Redi held a distinguished position as grandmaster of the Military Order of St. Stephen – factors that combined to provide the girl with a peaceful childhood under favourable conditions, regulated by the acts of piety that tradition prescribed. From an early age, she received graces that prepared her well in advance for the mission that God had reserved for her.

The first instrument Providence used to give direction to Anne-Marie's spiritual path was her own father. A contemplative and pious man, he used to take his daughter on walks that ended up at the Capuchins' church. Along the way he taught her how to pray the *Salve Regina* and the litanies, as well as how to look for the Creator in the beautiful Tuscan panorama: in the flowers, in the birds, in the sky... in everything! In this way, Ignatius Redi encouraged his little one to “spot” God in each of His creatures.

Also contributing to her Christian formation was the influence of her uncle Diego, a priest of the Society of Jesus. It was he who, years later, would introduce Anne-Marie to the devotion she enthusiastically embraced and to which she devoted her life: the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The custom of the time counselled the education of girls in convents, with one of the nuns as tutor. There they

received the necessary formation to become good Christian ladies or, perhaps, if they showed signs of a vocation, to enter that same monastery. Thus, when Anne-Marie was nine years old her parents sent her to the Benedictine Monastery of St. Apollonia in the city of Florence.

For seven years it pleased God to keep hidden in that cloister the little gemstone that He was polishing for himself. It is astonishing that one of the few testimonies that remain about her from that time says: “She was a good and normal girl; nothing extraordinary was noted in her behaviour.”

God destined her, from her earliest youth, to pass unnoticed by human eyes in order to shine only for Him.

Danger sighted: Jansenism

With the outbreak of the Jansenist heresy, characterized by its rigid, formal and gloomy moralism, much of the society of the time had tasted of its poison and was consequently dominated by the almost exclusive consideration of God's justice, to the exclusion of another of His perfections, goodness.

The cold and corrosive lava of Jansenism even seeped into cloisters and monasteries and threatened to form generations of religious who, only fearing the Lord, would forget the practice of the First Commandment: “Love God above all things.”

It was at this moment in Anne-Marie's life that Divine Providence revived in her soul the teachings of her father and her uncle Diego, both fervent enthusiasts of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that was timidly emerging in France. Although immersed in an environment where God was conceived as a ruthless Judge, the tender love that flowed from the Divine Heart attracted and strengthened her in the resolution she had made in early childhood: to please God in everything.

This devotion was the portal through which the Most High wished to open His intimacy with Anne-Marie, and the solid foundation that enabled her to remain steadfast in her faith amid the rigorist deviations of Jansenism.

Anne-Marie shaped her spiritual life through the contemplation of the mystery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, especially under the Eucharistic Species, and made the altar her delight. She would remain almost motionless for long hours in a mystical dialogue with Him who “so loved men.”

The superiors of the convent of St. Apollonia, noting the young woman's tendency to soar to supernatural things, imagined that they would soon have another novice in the community. But God reserved for His daughter an even deeper relationship with His Sacred Heart, amid austerity and silence.

Curious call to a vocation

In September 1763, a former student of the school of St. Apollonia appeared at the doors of the establishment to say goodbye to her for-



Francisco Lecaro

“I am Teresa of Jesus and I want you among my daughters!”

St. Teresa of Avila
San José Convent, Avila (Spain)

mer teachers. Cecilia Albergotti, a compatriot of Anne-Marie from one of the families of Arezzo's high society, had decided to enter Carmel in order to seek her sanctification and better serve the Church.

The word "Carmel" resounded in Anne-Marie's soul with a timbre of mystery and irresistible attraction. Perhaps it suggested to her the feats of St. Elijah, the promise of the coming of the Blessed Virgin into the world, and the invitation to a close commerce with Heaven through radicality, sobriety and contemplation.

While she was talking with Cecilia, Anne-Marie heard, mystically, with her interior senses, a distinct and clear voice that said: "I am Teresa of Jesus and I want you among my daughters!"⁷³ Frightened, she ran to the altar to take refuge in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, but to her surprise the voice spoke again,



Angelis David Ferreira

She placed herself under the patronage of her founder, and of the great St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

Apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque
Gesù Church, Miami (EUA)

this time leaving no room for doubt: "I am Teresa of Jesus and I want you among my daughters; soon you will be in my monastery."⁷⁴

The spiritual heritage left by St. Teresa of Avila is based on the stripping away of earthly things in order to ascend without hindrance to the celestial absolutes. The call that St. Teresa makes to each of her daughters in all things is far from an easy and comfortable one. And perhaps this is precisely the reason why it attracts so many souls thirsting to give themselves to God with heroism.

The decision of the young Anne-Marie to become a Carmelite surprised not only her teachers but also her family. And it brought her a period of trial on account of relatives who secretly harboured the hope that she enter the Benedictine Order.

Ignatius Redi, a prudent and devout man, wanted to try his daughter in the virtues that would be required of her by the strict Carmelite Order. For this reason he obliged her to wait long months in which he tested her docility, solicitude, obedience and, finally, even her faith. The last of these tests was a real interrogation by three illustrious ecclesiastics who, examining her, concluded that the Carmel was the best place for her to love, serve and glorify God.

After this trying period, in which time and waiting conspired as merciless tormenters for Anne-Marie, she finally said goodbye to her family and entered the "garden of God" in the city of Florence.

Another "Teresa" in the Carmel

Often the beginning of a religious' journey along the path set out by God is inundated with springtime joys; random episodes, circumstances and people are used by grace as means to unfold the beauty of the ideal they must follow.

For Anne-Marie, her entry into Carmel seemed to be an entrance into

terrestrial Paradise. In her writings, she calls her companions in the habit "angels" and declares herself unworthy of being with them.

Her particular community was composed for the most part of elderly religious who saw in the young novice a hope for the continuity of that Carmel, but also the opportunity to satisfy petty selfishness.

The magnanimity of Anne-Marie's soul was not shaken by the mistreatment she received from some of her sisters in the vocation. On the contrary, she knew, with the help of grace, how to use these little crosses to offer to God a sacrifice of agreeable odour that increasingly conformed her to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Victim of sinners.

After the novitiate period, the time arrived for her to make her profession among the daughters of St. Teresa. And at the moment of choosing her religious name, Anne-Marie placed herself under the patronage of her founder, and of the great St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, her model in devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

Obedience put to the test

What is known of the life of St. Teresa Margaret behind the cloistered walls is what could be expected of any fervent Carmelite: outstanding obedience, angelic purity and evangelical poverty. We may ask ourselves, then: what extraordinary things did she do to deserve the honour of the altars?

The answer is profoundly simple: by practising these three virtues to a heroic degree, she was faithful to the vow she made in her childhood to "please God in everything."

The narrations of her life relate a noteworthy episode which illustrates this reality. At one point, her obedience was put to the test when her superior entrusted her with the care of a sister who suffered from dementia. Once an exemplary religious, the sick woman had become extremely hostile,

brutish and rebellious. She had fits of madness in which she “demanded to eat precisely what the doctors forbade” or “indignantly rejected what she had wished for just moments before.”⁵ When her will was not heeded she immediately unleashed all her fury against her benefactor. The young nurse was often insulted and humiliated by her.

There was another nun who had to share the duty of caring for the sick religious with the Saint. To make matters worse, this assistant had a false concept of charity and, in order to avoid mistreatment, she consented to satisfy all the sick woman’s whims.

It was a complicated situation for St. Teresa Margaret: if she took care of the patient’s health according to the norms received, she would draw down on herself a torrent of insults, in addition to the misunderstanding of the other nun, who would blame her for the patient’s angry outbursts; if she consented to some of the desires of both, she would disobey the superior. In this impasse, she preferred to accept shame and affronts, thereby purchasing graces of fortitude and salvation for both the patient and her fellow sister nurse, rather than yielding in matters of obedience.

Three words that encompass the plenitude of love

The motto “to please God in everything” was for St. Teresa Margaret a beacon that guided her life outside and inside the monastery.

Her life testifies that those who seek to please the Lord in everything,



The motto “to please God in everything” was the beacon that guided her life

St. Teresa Margaret Redi -
Church of the Holy Angel, Seville (Spain)

at all times and in every situation, even adverse, attract the divine gaze and receive from God all the affection and care that the most loving of parents could devote to a weak but faithful child who abandons itself into their arms.

The vow that she had made at a very young age, perhaps with a somewhat puerile awareness of the pro-

found significance of what she promised, became the key to open the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to penetrate into the most intimate relationship with Him. And the Divine Saviour wanted, in His turn, to show her how pleasing that mystical relationship was to Him by granting her an extraordinary grace.

One day, as the community sang the Office together, and “as the choir was praying Terce, upon pronouncing the words ‘*Deus caritas est et qui manet in caritate in Deo manet et Deus in eo*’⁶ in the reading, Sr. Teresa Margaret felt herself enveloped by a wave of divine love”⁷ and was brought to experience the fullness of love enclosed in these three words: “*Deus caritas est.*”

What was shown to her in this ecstasy? God is love... the Holy Spirit is the Love of God. Did the Great Unknown manifest himself to her? With what graces had she been showered, and with what hopes had she been crowned?

Sadly, neither the heavenly communications that St. Teresa Margaret received at this moment, nor her impressions after the fact, have been recorded for history. It is only known that, after this, she was often seen during her daily tasks with her spirit recollected and absorbed in the repetition of the verse “*Deus caritas est,*” seeming to have her entire soul engaged in mystical communication with the Divine Redeemer.

May we learn, with the help of St. Teresa Margaret, “to please God in all things,” so that we may be brought into His presence, His intimacy and His perpetual joy. ✧

¹ Cf. SCIADINI, OCD, Patricio. *Santa Teresa Margarida Redi. Vida, escritos e espiritualidade.* São Paulo: Edições Carmelitanas, [s.d.], p.7.

² Idem, p.16.

³ Idem, p.18.

⁴ Idem, ibidem.

⁵ TEODORO DELL'ARCANGELO

RAFFAELLO, OCD. *Abrégé de la vie de la Servante de Dieu Sœur Thérèse-Marguerite Redi du Cœur de Jésus.* Avignon: Seguin Ainé, 1848, p.118.

⁶ From Latin: “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4:16).

⁷ SCIADINI, op. cit., p. 62.

A Small Stone, a Great Lesson



João Paulo Rodrigues

An act of kindness, a reproach or a word of encouragement may well be the “little stone” that will make it possible for my neighbour to reach the “mountain peak” of his spiritual life.



Sr. Mariana de Oliveira, EP

The Creator not only gifted the Brazilian nation with a vast territory, but also with an array of natural wonders. Among them we find the *Pico das Agulhas Negras* (Black Needles Peak), located on the border between the states of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais.

A palpable experience of angelic presence

At 2,791 metres of altitude, it stands out proudly on the horizon, as if declaring a challenge: “Come! Ascend me if you can! On my peak is the purest air, the most dazzling sun and an incredibly beautiful panorama! Come and sense the satisfaction of contemplating everything from above! Come and immerse yourself in reflections that only the heights can offer!”

Over the years, intrepid hearts, even bigger than the towering mountains, have accepted the bold challenge to climb to its peak and, indeed, the end result is not disappointing! There, one experiences the almost palpable presence of Angels, who certainly abound on those rugged summits, singing and praising God.

And while it serves as a lookout to admire the staggering grandeur of creation, the Black Needles Peak also urges us to give thanks to the Creator. The panorama from its summit may be vast and formidable, but, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, “the good of grace in one is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe.”¹ The reality that inhabits the human soul in a state of grace is immeasurable!

Only the most daring accept the challenge...

Those who accept the challenge to ascend the Black Needles Peak should prepare themselves for an arduous climb. Steep paths, rivulets, trees, crevices and stretches full of hazards await you along the way. To overcome so many difficulties, one must put all physical forces into play, never lose heart and never deviate from the goal.

At a certain point of the hike, the climber no longer faces the famous forks in its trails, but a fearsome rock wall... Everything seems to be lost for those who easily give up in the face of obstacles.

Only the most daring will be able to climb it. And these, without knowing yet what will be found further ahead, leap upon the rocks, eager to achieve the desired goal.

A small “bridge” brings us to the summit

At the beginning of the climb, everything goes relatively well. However, arriving at the highest point of the ice-cold rock face, a desperate obstacle arises: a wide gap between two rocks that, for the more “prudent” spirits, may indicate the end of the journey.

There is nowhere to stand, nor enough space to pick up momentum and jump. The only plausible solution in the face of this apparent impasse would seem to be to give up and go back. How unfortunate! Three hours of hard effort, and being one step from the top, it cannot be reached...

In fact, it would be impossible to complete the climb on such a path if there were not, slightly below the large span, a small rock – perhaps the smallest of all the others in sight – which serves as a “saving hyphen” for the climber to overcome the challenge!

A stone like this might seem insignificant in the midst of such a colossal panorama. However, it is the key to reaching the peak! Its position and size serve as a bridge to overcome the insurmountable obstacle, allowing one to reach the apex of the adventurous journey.

Beloved instruments of Divine Providence

On our return home, we stopped for a few moments in the chapel to pray. Kneeling in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, the experiences of the trip sprang to mind and, together with them, a valuable lesson.

That small rock taught us that when it comes to reaching a daring goal, the importance of the instruments that help us to get there does not depend on their size, but on the value that God has been pleased to give them. And this applies to both rocks and men.

It is not our physical, intellectual or social stature that makes us capable of supporting and elevating to the supernatural plane the souls

*It is not
our physical,
intellectual or
social stature that
makes us capable
of supporting and
elevating souls*

of those around us. For though we may be like insignificant rocks lying in a ditch on the way, we can have a great and even indispensable role in helping a neighbour reach his “Black Needles Peak”.

At times, God decides to use something as simple as a smile, an act of kindness, a reproach or a word of encouragement at the right moment to be the “little stone” that enables our neighbours to overcome the difficulties that separate them from the top of the spiritual mountain.

Souls who rejoice in helping others to climb are the beloved instruments which Divine Providence uses to write the most beautiful pages of history. The most sublime example among them is Our Lady. Having gone to help her cousin St. Elizabeth and, after occasioning the sanctification of St. John the Baptist yet in his mother’s womb, she sang:

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (cf. Lk 1:46-48) ✧

¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.113, a.9, ad 2.



Students from the Post-Secondary Course and those from the Heralds of the Gospel Seminary on the Black Needles trail; previous page, vista seen from atop the peak

What Is a Priest According to the Heart of God?

He is a little god on earth, a living image of Jesus Christ, an Angel for his purity of soul and body; these are some of the many titles the great St. John Eudes confers upon authentic priests.



St. John Eudes

The most precious gift and the most remarkable favour that Divine Goodness can do to a church is to give it a good shepherd, whether a bishop or a pastor. For this is the grace of graces and the gift of gifts, which contains all other gifts and all other graces. [...]

Mediator between God and men

A good shepherd is one of the commanders of the army of the Great God, always armed and fighting incessantly for His glory and for the defence of His Church against His enemies – the devil, the world, the flesh and sin – in order to conquer kingdoms for Him; that is, to conquer souls, for every faithful soul is a kingdom of God, more valuable to Him than all earthly empires.

Such a shepherd is one of the princes of the Kingdom of God and one of the kings of His Empire, which is His Church, established by God to rule, according to the laws and evangelical precepts, as many kings and queens as Christians under his direction, and to make them worthy to possess eternally the same kingdom with the sovereign Monarch of the universe.

He is an apostle and an evangelist whose main mission is to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ ceaselessly, in public and in private, by word and deed, and to continue on earth the functions to which the Apostles dedicated themselves, as well as the life and virtues they practised.

He is the sacred spouse of the divine Spouse, that is to say, the Church of Jesus Christ, and he is so inflamed with pure and most holy love for her that day and night he only seeks by all means to embellish her, adorn her, enrich her, and make her worthy of the eternal love of her heavenly and immortal Spouse.

He is a mediator between God and men, to help them know, adore, serve, fear and love God; to communicate to them His will; to direct them to render Him every homage; finally, to be continually occupied, in spirit and in heart, in word and in deed, in the things that appertain to the service and glory of God (cf. Heb 5:1). [...]

A living and itinerant god

What shall I add?

A good shepherd is a saviour and a Jesus Christ on earth, taking the place of Christ, representing His Per-

son, vested with His authority, acting in His Name, adorned with His qualities, exercising His judgement in the Tribunal of Penance, performing the highest functions exercised by Him in this world. Constituted to continue the work of the Redemption of the universe, he employs for this, in imitation of Christ, his entire spirit, his heart, his affections, his strength, his time, always ready to give his blood and sacrifice his life in order to achieve by every means the salvation of the souls entrusted to him.

He is a living and itinerant god; a god by grace, by participation and by a very strong and particular likeness; a god clothed with the qualities and the perfections of God, namely: His authority, His power, His justice, His mercy, His spirit, His charity, His goodness, His kindness, His purity and His holiness; a god engaged in God's most important works, as are all pastoral and priestly functions, for the great St. Dionysius the Areopagite said: "The most divine of all divine things is to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls."¹ Finally, as St. Gregory Nazianzen says, a god who produces gods,² that is, Christians who in the divine Scriptures bear the name of god.

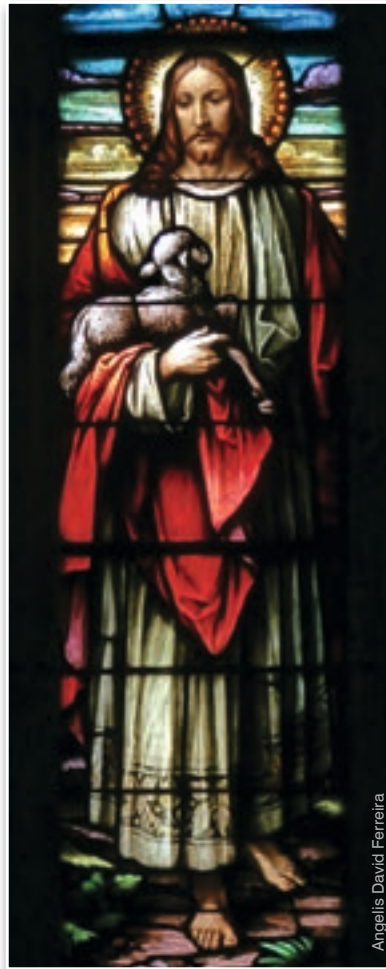
He is a shepherd in whom one sees a living image of the goodness and vigilance of the great Shepherd of souls. He is a shepherd who does not abandon his sheep to the mercy of the infernal wolf who devours them, but is habitually in their midst, in order to keep them always in his sight to lead them, and so that they may always see him and follow him. He is a shepherd who knows all his sheep and is attentive to their needs, weaknesses and illnesses, ready to remedy them.

Leading his sheep by good example

He is a shepherd who feeds his flock by word and example, spiritually and corporeally, as far as is in his power; he is not one of those about whom a holy Doctor comments: “The Divine Judge will rigorously judge the laity, with greater rigour the religious, and most rigorously the wicked and dissolute shepherds. Of these, God will demand strict accounts for not having supplied their sheep’s needs through temporal assistance; and even more severe accounts for not having sated them by the word and heavenly doctrine; and the most severe accounts for not having supplied them with the example of a good life.” [...]

Whoever speaks of such a shepherd and such a priest, speaks of a man who often and carefully considers the obligations of his office; who is informed of the needs of his sheep in order to take action; who carefully investigates the disorders in the flock so as to eliminate them; and who applies himself in every way to promote the glory of God and the salvation of all the souls entrusted to him, for which he must answer, blood for blood and soul for soul.

Whoever speaks of such a shepherd and such a priest, speaks of a man who applies all of his capacity, his action, his heart, his thoughts, his affections, his words, his time, his goods, his life – all that his is, knows, and can do, to



The Good Shepherd - Blessed Sacrament Church in Bronx, New York

*A good shepherd
feeds his flock by
word and example,
spiritually and
corporeally, as far
as is in his power*

demolish the tyranny of satan and of sin, and to establish Christ’s Kingdom in the hearts of those whom God has confided to him.

A Cherub for his clarity, a Seraph for his charity

Finally, to speak of such a shepherd and such a priest is to speak of an Angel for his purity of soul and body, a Cherub for clarity and knowledge, a Seraph for love and charity, an Apostle for his zeal, effort and holiness; a little god on earth, with power and authority, patience and kindness; a living image of Jesus Christ in this world, of Christ watching over, praying, preaching, catechizing, working, sweating, weeping, going from city to city and village to village; suffering, agonizing, dying and sacrificing himself for the salvation of all souls created in His image and likeness.

Such a shepherd and such a priest is the light of those who lie in darkness and the shadow of death (cf. Lk 1:79), the recovery of the wayward, the hammer and destruction of errors, schisms and heresies, the conversion of sinners, the sanctification of the just, the strength of the weak, the consolation of the afflicted, the treasure of the poor, the joy of the good, the dread of the wicked, the confusion of hell, the glory of Heaven, the terror of demons, the joy of the Angels, the ruin of the kingdom of satan, the establishment of the Empire of Jesus Christ, the adornment of the Church, and the crown of the sovereign Shepherd. He is, in a word, a universe of goods, of graces and of blessings for the whole Church, especially for the one in which God established him. ✧

Taken from: *Oeuvres complètes. Le Mémorial de la Vie Ecclésiastique.*
Vannes: Lafolye Frères,
1906, t.III, p.23-32.

¹ ST. DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE.
De Cœlesti Hierarchia, c.V.

² “*Deum existentem et Deos efficientem*”
(ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN. *Orat. Apolog.*).



Serene Pilgrimage

In Dona Lucilia could be found the grandeur of Christian old age, sanctified by the merit of motherhood, and glorified by that discreet halo that sufferings borne in union with Christ bestows upon the soul and the features of all the just.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

Certain wines, in order to give their best to those who will taste them, are stored in the solitude of deep cellars, out of the sunlight. There, over a period of years and decades, their flavour is refined, they acquire a rich bouquet, their harsh aftertaste mellows, and even their colour is enlivened.

Age, which perfects the flavour of good wine, also brings out the virtues of just souls. With Dona Lucilia, affability only became more refined with the passing of time. Her interior elevation was increasingly infused with the supernatural, her manners and her presence became, to an even greater degree, attractive factors of well-being and respectability.

Just as wine revitalizes a weakened body, Dona Lucilia – imbued with profound confidence in the infinite goodness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus – continued to give solace to all those who approached her needing consolation, expertly applying the balm of Christian charity.

If Dona Lucilia had given up her soul to God at this point, her earthly existence would already have been a beautiful one. Yet, over the last phase

of her life, the plenitude of her affection and benevolence would achieve an even brighter lustre within the recollected setting of her residence.

If they had the gift of speech, the walls and the objects of this apartment would have so much to say. How we would like to hear what the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus could tell us about Dona Lucilia's ceaseless prayers. No one ever knew what she said to Our Lord during those silent dialogues – on this point, she did not even confide to her son.

Yet while this hallowed intimacy would remain an inviolable secret, some small episodes of Dona Lucilia's serene home life have made their way beyond the walls of that blessed home.

Maternal care

From a tender age, Dr. Plinio had been gifted with a lucid and uncommon discernment of spirits – a gift of the Holy Spirit which, from the first glimmer of his reason, he put to use regarding his own mother. In this way, he had a deep understanding of the elevated qualities with which Providence had adorned her soul. Later,

concrete facts confirmed the authenticity of what he had discerned.

As he left home one day for his law office, his mother accompanied him, as usual, to the elevator door. After they parted, she went to the living room, already deliberating over the nice dinner that she was going to prepare him. To help her plan the menu, there was no other sounding board at hand than her husband.

She had no idea that her son would have the opportunity to witness, with true enchantment, the quaint scene that then transpired. Had he not seen it, he would never have been able to imagine it. Returning to pick up a paper he had left behind, he slipped into the apartment silently so as not to disturb his parents. Passing close to the living room, he heard Dona Lucilia's voice through the half-open door:

— João Paulo, I was thinking about making such-and-such a dish for Plinio. Do you think that would be good?

— Yes, very good...

— But do you think Plinio would really enjoy that and not something else?

Along the Path of Old Age

Seated comfortably in an armchair, Dr. João Paulo replied:

— Yes, certainly he would enjoy it!

Not entirely convinced, Dona Lucilia pressed a little further with her natural amiability:

— I don't know, João Paulo, if that's really the best dish. Might he not prefer such-and-such?

Somewhat baffled, not seeing the reason for such concern, he answered:

— Well, I guess a father is no mother. If it was up to me, I'd tell him: "Young man, what's for dinner is this and that. If you don't like it, go to a restaurant."

Now if there was one thing that Dona Lucilia did not want, it was to give up her son's company at dinner. Therefore, she limited herself to calmly expressing her disagreement with that reply:

— No, no!...

Delighted with this fresh proof of maternal solicitude, Dr. Plinio slipped away without being noticed. On the street, he mused to himself: "A father, as good as he may be, is not capable of taking this kind of care. Such questions could only occur to the heart of a devoted mother – with

its delicacy, subtlety, and desire to please. That's why the menu at home is so tasty..."

Much appreciated for her culinary skill

The constant "love one another" oriented even the simplest actions of this incomparable mother, and this included her culinary art.

In planning a menu, she strove to "season" the food much more with affection and goodness than simply with ordinary ingredients. Needless to say, Dr. Plinio was especially fond of this "recipe," for though he was al-

*The constant
"love one another"
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culinary art*

ways a good gastronome, he was an even better son.

Those close to Dona Lucilia were able to not only experience her benevolence, but also to appreciate the cuisine prepared according to her instructions. For example, Dona Zili's husband, Nestor, warmly remembered the Sunday dinners put on by his sister-in-law, years after she had passed away.

He would say that he didn't know anyone as capable of organizing the preparation of such delicious dishes as Dona Lucilia, especially her appetizing homemade desserts. Particularly noteworthy among these were Dr. Plinio's birthday cakes, the only project that she would carry out entirely by herself, with considerable flair.

In fact, even as Dona Lucilia reached an advanced age and relied on a wheelchair to move about, she still insisted on preparing this cake – a superlative chocolate pavé, artistically decorated – for her son's birthday. Sparing no effort, she would first sketch out her plan in all its particulars, choosing the shape, the colours, and the final touches; and then she would follow her design to the letter.



Dona Lucilia's recipe book; previous page, Dona Lucilia attends a conference given by Dr. Plinio in São Paulo's FIESP Auditorium

“This lady is very Spanish!”

Notwithstanding her great tenderness, Dona Lucilia, was uncompromising in the defence of Catholic principles. If these came under attack by anyone at all, she would draw herself up, seeming to increase her height, and, without losing her gentility, and always in a calm tone, she would immediately voice her opposition:

— No! That is not so... And she would proceed to set things straight.

Dr. João Paulo, like a genuine native of Pernambuco, had a decidedly placid temperament. Dr. Plinio declared him to be the most pacific man he ever met. His many years of married life with Dona Lucilia were spent in the most perfect harmony. Whenever he saw her assuming a more emphatic stance, he would murmur to his son, referring good-humouredly to certain bloodlines she carried from her remote ancestry:

— Uh-oh!... This Spanish lady!...

The crystal vase

Evidently, whenever Dr. João Paulo was experiencing difficulties, Dona Lucilia would turn her unequalled kindness toward him in a special way, with all the compassion of someone who knows how to penetrate to the deepest part of a person's suffering, to apply to it a drop of soothing balm.

One afternoon, when he returned home from work, Dr. Plinio found his father alone in the living room. He greeted him in the customary way:

— Good afternoon, Papa, how are you?

— Fine, thank you – responded Dr. João Paulo morosely. Without guessing the reason for his mood, his son headed to Dona Lucilia's room, where he found her praying.

When she saw him enter, she made a sign with her finger for him to speak

quietly, and to sit down next to her. Then, in a voice filled with compassion she said:

— *Filhão*... Did you see how crestfallen your poor father is? He accidentally knocked over your magnificent Bohemian crystal vase, which fell to the floor and shattered.

— My dear, Papa broke the crystal vase? – Dr. Plinio exclaimed, taken by surprise and unable to hide his disappointment, since it was an object he valued highly.

— Yes, but he is suffering keenly... A word from you would be all it would take to make him feel better. Would you do that for your mother?

Dr. Plinio would have forgiven his father with entire good will in any case – after all, the loss of a mere crystal vase, as fine as it may be, was no grounds for such distress. In reply to Dona Lucilia's affection-

*Notwithstanding
her great tenderness,
Dona Lucilia, was
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in the defence of
Catholic principles*

ate request, he went straight to Dr. João Paulo to put him at ease. With a smile, he told him not to worry, he knew it was an accident, and to him it was of no importance. His words immediately reassured his dejected father and restored his habitual good humour.

Similar manifestations of Dona Lucilia's affection reached far beyond the confines of her own home. If her compassion was so readily extended even toward strangers, it was

all the more so within family circles, whether close or distant.

An unexpected visit

One day, Dona Lucilia was sitting down to a meal, when a distant relative, to whom life had dealt many heavy blows, rang the bell of the apartment.

The maid, having answered the door, came to announce that Dona So-and-so was at the door, and wished to speak to Dona Lucilia. The latter, knowing about the hardships that this person had experienced, interrupted her lunch and hurried to the foyer to receive her with great affability.

— Oh, So-and so! How are you? Please come in...

She invited her into the dining room, offered her a seat at table and put her entirely at ease. Dona Lucilia inspired such confidence, that the visitor soon ventured to tell her about her troubles and sorrows. She received, as she had hoped, every consolation and encouragement to forge ahead on life's rough roads, trusting in Divine Providence.

Once again, a counsel coming from the lips of someone who followed the law of the Divine Master's mercy had been a powerful aid to those who had been struck down by life's blows. This way of acting, that complemented Dona Lucilia's other virtues, was yet another point of resistance against the moral decline of her times. Indeed, the myth of success had led many of her contemporaries to flee with disdain from anyone hit by misfortune, as if it were leprosy that was spread by contact...

***“If you were to lose
the Faith, it would be to me as
if you had died”***

From everything that has been narrated so far, it is easy to deduce that Dona Lucilia's ocean of tenderness toward her very Catholic son was

firmly rooted in the Faith. The question could arise: Was this maternal affection not predominantly based on human sentiments?

It was Dr. Plinio who obtained the reply. On one occasion, he wished to measure the extent to which the love of God in Dona Lucilia outweighed her natural love of a mother for her son. When two of them were at table alone, he led the theme of the conversation “by chance” to the point that he wished to cover. He then affirmed:

— Mother dear, it is because you are a Catholic that I have such affection for you. If, for example, during this meal, you were to tell me that you had become a protestant, I would immediately interrupt you, saying: “You are the lady of this house. Here are the house keys; I’m going to live elsewhere. I will not fail to provide you with what you need to live with dignity, but we will only get together two or three times a year, at most!”

“I would do this with the greatest displeasure of my soul, because the true bond of our affection would have been broken. To me, it would feel like you were no longer a mother. It would be as if you had died. If you became a protestant, you would cease to be what you are to me.”

It could be supposed that Dona Lucilia’s maternal sensibility would have been hurt by these words. She had made so many sacrifices for her children throughout her life, and had loved them so tenderly that Dr. Plinio’s categorical attitude may have been taken as a mark of ingratitude. But, much to the contrary, she listened to these words so naturally that, without the least sign of astonishment, she continued calmly with her meal. It did not seem to her that her son had said anything extraordinary, for she thought and felt the same way.



Statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that was enshrined a room of Dona Lucilia’s residence

The white-haired lady

“I beheld the authentic figure of a great Christian lady. Time had left its indelible mark upon her whole being; a mark of deep sorrows, borne with great nobility, with great gentleness of soul. Her eyes were calm, beautiful and mournful. They were penetrating yet sweet, intelligent yet serene.

“Her bearing, her gestures, her clothing were of that simple, noble and unconcerned elegance that true good manners lends to human vesture. The tone of her voice – affable, reserved and nuanced, revealed a heart both strong and delicate.

“At certain moments, the light streaming through the window illuminated her white hair. A silvery reflection, mixing itself with the gentleness of her gaze, spread over her countenance. All light brings happiness to mind. The light of that white hair brought to mind a happiness that is not of this world. It was the grandeur of Christian old age, sanctified by the merit of motherhood, glorified by that discreet halo that sufferings borne in union with Christ bestows upon the soul and the features of all the just. Great dignity – even a certain majesty, we would say. Not the arduous, hard-earned and dubious majesty of wealth, but the unique and supreme majesty that flows from the dignity of motherhood, felt and lived to the deepest fibres of a heart born of noble lineage”.

*Dona Lucilia’s
face reflected
a soul glorified
by that discreet
halo imparted by
sufferings borne in
union with Christ*

It was for seeing such a sublime and selfless love for the Catholic Church in his mother that, moments after her death, in the room where she had died, Dr. Plinio made this impressive affirmation:

“I admired her much more for being the way she was, and for the virtue I discerned in her, than for being my mother. In fact, if she had been someone else’s mother and not mine, I would have done everything possible to be able to live close to her.”

Taken, with slight adaptations,
from: *Dona Lucilia*.
Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV;
Heralds of the Gospel,
2013, p.525-533.



Photos: David Domingues

São Paulo – With a Mass in the Basilica of Carmel, solemnized by the choir of the Heralds, the 300th anniversary of the St. Elijah Carmelite Province was commemorated. In his words of thanks, the pastor, Friar Thiago Borges, declared: “This work of the Heralds of the Gospel is a work of God in the life of the people!”



Photos: Eduardo Pássero

Pernambuco (Brazil) – In mid-July, the Masses held in the House of the Heralds (left) were opened once again to the participation of the public. And, continuing the “Quarantine, Faith and Charity” campaign, dozens of basic supply baskets were delivered to Immaculate Conception Parish in the city of Moreno (right), among numerous other activities.



Photos: Guillermo Torres Bauer

Colombia – The Heralds were invited to participate in the Solemn Mass celebrated in the National Shrine of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, Patroness of Colombia, on her feast day. The central intention was to pray for those who have died as a result of the pandemic, and to beseech the Blessed Virgin’s special protection of Colombia.



Photos: Agostino Mapanga

Mozambique – The Archbishop of Maputo, Most Rev. Francisco Chimoio, OFM, celebrated a Mass in the Radio Maria Studio for the repose of the soul of Br. José Eduardo Pinheiro, EP (at centre of photo on the left), who was a missionary of the Heralds in this country for many years. He surrendered his soul to God in São Paulo, on June 25.



Photos: David Domingues

São Paulo – Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer presided at a Eucharistic Celebration which, on June 26, commemorated the elevation of St. Anne's Parish, in the North Zone of São Paulo, to the honour of a Minor Basilica. The Heralds of the Gospel choir was invited to participate in the celebration, which was transmitted live by TV-Arautos.



Photos: Valdeci Silva

Campos dos Goytacazes (Rio de Janeiro) – To help in the fight against the pandemic, missionaries of the Heralds of the Gospel headed to downtown streets to distribute 1,500 thousand face masks made by Herald cooperators together with the Shop Owners Association.



CHURCH AND WORLD EVENTS

AIE publishes new guide for exorcists

Last May, the International Association of Exorcists (AIE) published a document entitled “Guidelines for the Ministry of Exorcism: In Light of the Current Ritual.” It aims to help priests who already exercise this ministry, as well as to serve as a tool for those who are in formation for this purpose.

In the introduction to the guide, Fr. Francesco Bamonte, president of the AIE, recalls that in cases of true demonic possession, exorcism “manifests its salvific, positive character,” provided it is done “according to the norms established by the Church – inspired by genuine faith and necessary prudence.”

For his part, Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome, stated in his preface that the exorcist “works within the framework of an official mission that makes him in some way representative of Christ and the Church.” For this reason, Fr. Bamonte emphasizes, “Pretending to understand Catholic exorcism without having a living faith in Christ and what He, in the revelation given to the Church, teaches us about Satan and the demonic world, is like wanting to deal with second degree equations without knowing the four basic operations of mathematics and their properties.”

The International Association of Exorcists was legally recognized on June 13, 2014 by a decree of the Con-

gregation for the Clergy. With about eight hundred members around the world, the initiative arose from a small group of priests, including the renowned Fr. Gabriele Amorth and Fr. Candido Amantini.

Carmelites promulgate original writings of St. Teresa of the Andes

The Discalced Carmelites of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit of Los Andes, located in the Diocese of San Felipe, Chile, have set up a website in which the complete text of all the original writings of St. Teresa of Los Andes have been posted. The initiative takes place on the occasion of the first centenary of the Chilean Saint’s death.

“We wanted to create this website so that the figure of our first Chilean Saint and the first flower of holiness of the Teresian Carmel in Latin America can be better known,” explain the nuns.

By means of these texts, which include letters, writings from her diary and literary compositions, it is possible to learn more about the family and monastic life of St. Teresa of Los Andes, as well as to delve deeper into her mystical side.

Vatican Library creates new website

The Vatican Library launched a new website in July to facilitate and expand access to its collection and services. In the new portal, visitors will be able to find out about, see and consult various contents such as medals, coins, engravings and manuscripts.

In addition, people who register will have access to a reserved area where they can resolve questions and make specific requests, such as photo-reproductions for scientific research or professional use.

“Graphic art evolves rapidly in this type of digital communication,

so for some time we have been aware that we needed to update it with something faster and more intuitive,” commented the prefect of the Vatican Library, Monsignor Cesare Pasini.

“Naturally, we do not neglect personal service to those who visit us and we try to serve them well. But especially in this time of a health emergency that we are experiencing, with limited mobility it is more difficult for many to come directly to the Library. Therefore, this attractive and open communication site, with a wealth of content, aims to be an important place of welcome, collaboration and openness,” he states.

“With the site we want to make ourselves known for what we are and what we have, and to offer a service that extends to the furthest frontiers of the world,” the Monsignor concludes.

Scottish bishops warn about making possession of a Bible a crime

On July 29, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland sent a communiqué to the Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament, commenting on the new “Hate Crime and Public Order Bill,” proposed by the nation’s government.

According to the prelates, one of the sections of the bill could lead to the criminalization of books such as the Bible and the Catechism and, consequently, to the censorship of Catholic teaching in the country.

The concerns are focused on section 5 of the document, which aims to establish the “offence of possessing inflammatory material” and which, according to the Scottish Bishops’ Conference, has poorly defined boundaries.

This legislation, introduced by the Scottish government on April 23, creates yet another offence: stirring up hatred against any of the protect-

ed groups covered by the same bill, determined according to criteria of race, religion and gender identity.

The bishops also cited in their communiqué the recent considerations they made to the government regarding the proposed revision of the Gender Recognition Act of 2004. They recalled the Church's teaching "that sex and gender are not fluid and changeable, and that male and female are complementary and ordered towards the creation of new life." In this regard, they state that "such pronouncements [...] might be perceived by others as an abuse of their own, personal worldview and likely to stir up hatred."

Restoration of Notre-Dame Cathedral organ has begun

On August 3, the state department responsible for the reconstruction of Notre-Dame Cathedral, ravaged by fire in 2019, began work to restore the church's monumental eight thousand-pipe organ. Although it did not suffer direct damage from the flames, the instrument was coated with soot, ashes and a toxic lead dust, which must be carefully removed.

Experts involved in this immense task estimate an approximately four-year project. The department over-

seeing the work say that just to tune the instrument after it has been restored it will take six months.

Despite President Emmanuel Macron's statement that he hopes the Cathedral will be able to reopen in 2024, his government took more than a year to remove lead residue and the scaffolding that had been erected before the fire. To date, no reconstruction work has begun on the building.

Archbishop protests lack of dialogue regarding quarantine measures

In a statement read at the end of the Mass celebrated in the Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré in honour of St. Anne on her feast day, July 26, the Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec, Gerald Cyprien Lacroix, spoke out about the lack of communication between government and ecclesiastical authorities regarding measures to control the COVID-19 epidemic that have been implemented in the country.

According to him, the existence of the Church is being ignored on an ongoing basis despite its consistent willingness to collaborate.

"Government authorities are not taking us seriously," he said. "We have never been able to establish a frank

and direct dialogue with government nor public health officials." The Cardinal also said contact with authorities has been limited to third parties, and the bishops are only aware of the norms when they are published by the press.

Since June 22, only fifty people are allowed to participate in each Mass, although the Quebec Department of Public Health has established that this is not a strict limit. Furthermore, beginning on that date, without any dialogue, a distance of two metres between parishioners, washing of hands, sanitization of the premises and distribution of Communion in the hand has been imposed.

The Cardinal protests that such restrictions for public Masses are more stringent than those applied for activities in casinos. And he denounced the fact that the sale of alcoholic beverages and marijuana were included in the list of "essential services" by Quebec officials, while "faith communities, which undoubtedly we consider capable of offering an essential service [...], were virtually ignored."

Lamenting "restrictions on us that go beyond reasonable," the Cardinal concludes: "Do not abuse our patience, and stop ignoring our existence and our sense of responsibility."

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The Secret to Heroism

Who will be truly strong and courageous at the hour of combat?
Only those who, throughout their lives, succeed in preserving the
pearl that the Hearts of Jesus and Mary placed in their soul.



Gabriele Matiello

Long ago, there existed a small city where the people daily strove to do everything with perfection in order to please Jesus and Mary. Early each morning, before its inhabitants began to work, play or study, they attended Holy Mass in order to gain the needed strength to face the day's battles as faithful and devout children of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Travellers passing through the region noticed the wondrous effects of the people's piety on nature itself: the rivers ran as clear as crystal; the plants grew as green as emeralds... It seemed that everything there formed a harmony fit to receive the Queen of Heaven and her Divine Son.

In that city, there lived a truly innocent lad by the name of Jonas. Ever since he was little, he had delighted to hear the stories his father told him, and they made him wonder how life would be in a world where Jesus and Mary truly reigned. Often, he would ask his father question such as:

"Papa, if such good things exist here on earth, such as precious stones, the sea and the stars, what must Heaven be like?"

Amazed at the little boy's constant fascination with Celestial Paradise, his father took the opportunity to teach him the best way to discover the answer to his questions:

"Well, my son, I've never seen Heaven, but many saints had the grace of seeing it during their lives, and they tell us that it is so beautiful and grand that no human words can describe it. But there's one thing that I can guarantee you: if you conduct yourself as a true hero in this earthly life, you will see Heaven one day."

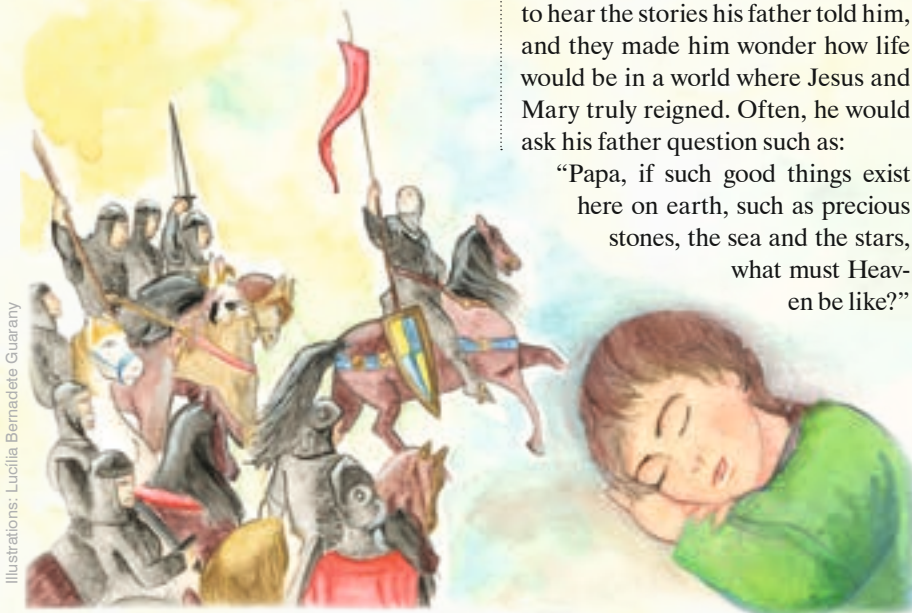
Hearing words like these, Jonas grew more and more eager to become a saint, so as to be able to reach that eternal dwelling place.

One day, as he walked down the road wrapped in such thoughts, Jonas heard a great tumult.

"What's going on?" he curiously asked a man who was watching the scene.

"A royal messenger has come to our city!" the man told him.

The youngster did not hesitate to approach, and soon beheld a knight descending from his horse to address the townsfolk with stirring words: "The general commander of the royal army wishes to convoke all able



Illustrations: Lucilla Bernadete Guarany

Jonas had a dream that was puzzling, but highly significant...

young men to join the battle to defend the kingdom from the foe, for, even as I speak, they are preparing to march against us.”

Silence gripped the multitude... But Jonas was enthralled by the noble warrior’s armour and shining sword, as well as by his valiant bearing and his fearless gaze. Without even stopping to think that he was too young to enlist, he boldly stepped forward to present himself:

“At your service, sir! I am ready to fight in this battle!”

The knight, looking at the boy’s young and carefree face, said:

“I would accept you only on one condition: are you willing to suffer terrible blows, and even to die on enemy ground?”

After a moment’s reflection, the boy replied:

“Sir, I am aware that war is not a stroll through flowery meadows. But, aren’t we here on this earth to face struggles and difficulties? With Our Lady’s help, each suffering will be another step on my way up the staircase that leads to Heaven.”

Impressed by his response, the warrior agreed to take the boy with him.

A few short days later, it was time for Jonas to bid his family farewell. He was sad to be leaving them, but overjoyed at the thought of taking part in a battle. His father took him aside to give some valuable advice:

“Remember, my son, that it is more important to preserve the innocence and purity of your soul than to show your strength and courage to others. So, be on guard! Never allow vice and immorality to enter your soul.”

The boy scarcely understood the meaning of that counsel, but he kept it carefully in his heart.

Before long, however, the reason for his father’s words became all too clear. At camp, though many respected and admired him for his



**Those who fight to keep the pearl
of their innocence intact have
nothing to fear**

courage and candour, he soon had to face his first battles. It cost him dearly to stand up against the ridicule of those who, having lost their own innocence, despised the blamelessness and rectitude they saw in Jonas.

In the midst of these difficulties, the lad had a dream that was puzzling, but highly significant... He saw those who mocked him surrounded

by devils carrying coals, while their Guardian Angels remained at a distance, impeded from taking action. Gathered in another unit of the same battalion, he beheld those who preserved their innocence surrounded by Angels bearing white pearls in their hands, symbolizing the virtue of those souls in their care.

Then he saw that when the enemy army appeared, not everyone had courage to advance and fight, but only those who had preserved their innocence. At that moment, his dream was interrupted by a bugle call, convoking the knights to assemble before their captain for an announcement:

“The time has come for combat! Our adversaries are fast approaching and they greatly outnumber us. But what they have in quantity, they do not have in quality. This battle will not be led by humans, but by Our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Therefore, men, let us trust in God. The victory shall be His!”

Since the enemy had already surrounded the camp, the warriors had to immediately draw their swords and hurl themselves into the fray. At that moment, Jonas saw the very scene he had just beheld in his dream: as the enemy forces advanced toward those who had lost their innocence, they fled in terror. On the other hand, the worthy knights fought boldly to attain victory.

It was then that the youth fully understood the message that his father had so earnestly impressed upon him as he left home: only those who fight to keep the pearl of their innocence intact will be truly strong and courageous at the hour of combat.

That pearl is the most precious gift we receive from the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Whoever fights vigorously each day to defend it will have nothing to fear in the hardest battles or when facing the most powerful enemy! ✧

THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

1. St. Lupus of Sens, bishop (†c. 623). Bishop of Sens, France, he was exiled from his diocese for having declared that his people must obey God before the rulers of this world.

2. Blessed Brocard, religious (†c. 1231). Prior of the hermits of Mount Carmel in Palestine, to whom St. Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, gave the first Rule of the Carmelite Order.

3. St. Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church (†604 Rome).

Sts. John Pak Hu-jae and five companions, martyrs (†1839). Beheaded in Seoul, Korea, after enduring cruel torments for being Christian.

4. St. Rosalia, virgin (†twelfth century). At a very young age she abandoned the luxury of the court to go and live as a hermitess on Mount Pellegrino, near Palermo, Italy.

5. St. Bertin, abbot (†c. 698). Together with St. Momelin he founded the monastery of Sithieu in Saint-Omer, France. He was abbot there for approximately two hundred years.

6. 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Blessed Bertrand of Garrigues, priest (†c. 1230). Disciple of St. Dominic, he was prior of the convent of Toulouse and later founded monasteries of the Order in Paris, Avignon and Montpellier.

7. St. Stephen of Châtillon, bishop (†1208). Carthusian monk appointed Bishop of Die, France. He governed the diocese virtuously, without abandoning the austerity of monastic life.

8. Nativity of Our Lady.

St. Peter of Chavanon, priest (†c. 1080). He founded a monastery of canons regular in Pébrac, France.

9. St. Peter Claver, priest (†1654 Cartagena - Colombia).

Blessed George Douglas, priest and martyr (†1587). Scottish priest condemned to death in York during the reign of Elizabeth I.

10. St. Nicholas of Tolentino, priest (†1305). Religious from the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine, he preached the reform of customs in Tolentino, Italy.

11. St. Paphnutius, bishop (†fourth century). Egyptian bishop tortured during the persecutions of Galerius Maximianus. He defended the divinity of Our Lord against Arianism at the Council of Nicaea.

12. Most Holy Name of Mary.

Blessed Maria Luisa Proserpi, abbess (†1847). Benedictine religious from Trevi, Italy, to whom



St. Richardis of Andlau Abbey of St. Richardis, Andlau (France)

Our Lord granted extraordinary mystical gifts, but without sparing her long and sorrowful trials.

13. 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. John Chrysostom, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†407 Comana - Turkey).

Blessed Mary of Jesus López de Rivas, virgin (†1640). Disciple of St. Teresa of Avila and Prior-ess of the Carmel of Toledo. She received communications of the sorrows of the Passion of Our Lord in her body and soul.

14. Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

St. Notburga, virgin (†1313). Humble domestic maid in the village of Eben, Austria, she served Christ in the poor, giving to all an admirable example of sanctity.

15. Our Lady of Sorrows.

Blessed Camillus Costanzo, priest and martyr (†1622). Italian Jesuit burned alive during the persecution in Japan. Even while engulfed in the fire, he did not cease to preach faith in Christ.

16. St. Cornelius, Pope (†252 Civitavecchia), **and St. Cyprian, bishop** (†258 Carthage), martyrs.

St. Martin of Finojosa, bishop (†1213). Abbot of the Cistercian monastery of St. Mary of Huerta, Spain. He was ordained Bishop of Sigüenza, where he strove to reform the clergy.

17. St. Robert Bellarmine, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†1621 Rome).

St. Lambert, bishop and martyr (†c.705). Bishop of Maastricht, Belgium, during a time of political unrest, he was exiled and lived for seven years as a simple monk.

18. St. Richardis, empress (†c. 895). After being widowed, she entered the Andlau Abbey, in Germany, where she spent the rest of her life in prayer and works of charity.

19. St. Januarius, bishop and martyr (†fourth century Pozzuoli - Italy).

St. Theodore, bishop (†690). He was almost seventy years of age when Pope St. Vitalian appointed him Bishop of Canterbury, England.

20. 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Sts. Andrew Kim Taegon, priest, **Paul Chong Hasang and companions**, martyrs (†1839-1866 Korea).

Blessed Thomas Johnson, priest and martyr (†1537). Religious from the Charterhouse in London. He died from starvation and infirmity while incarcerated in chains due to his fidelity to the Church.

21. St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist.

St. Jonah, prophet. Sent by God to preach in Nineveh. His expulsion from the belly of the whale, narrated in Sacred Scripture, was a prefigure of Christ's Resurrection.

22. Blessed Vincent Sicluna

Hernández, priest and martyr (†1936). Zealous priest from the city of Navarrés, who refused to abandon the faithful during the persecutions of the Spanish Civil War.

23. St. Pio of Pietrelcina, priest (†1968 San Giovanni Rotondo - Italy).

St. Linus, Pope and martyr (†first century). Second Pope of history. As St. Irenaeus relates, it was St. Peter and St. Paul who en-



Francisco Lecaros

Sts. Cosmas and Damian - Carmelite Church, Corella (Spain)

trusted the pastoral care of the Church to him. He is mentioned by the Apostle in the second letter to Timothy (cf 2 Tm 4:21).

24. Blessed Anton Martin Slomšek, bishop (†1862). Educator, catechist and writer, he diligently cared for ecclesiastical institutions and the Christian life of families, working for the unity of the Church in Slovenia.

25. Blessed Marcos Criado, priest and martyr (†1569). Spanish Trinitarian religious, stoned to death by Moors in the mountains of Alpujarras, Spain.

26. Sts. Cosmas and Damian, martyrs (†c. third century Cyrrhus, Syria).

Blessed Lucia of Caltagirone, virgin (†1400). Religious of the Franciscan Third Order Regular, outstanding for her fidelity to the Rule and devotion to the Five Wounds of Christ.

27. 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Vincent de Paul, priest (†1660 Paris).

Blessed John Baptist Laborier du Vivier, deacon and mar-

tyr (†1794). He was condemned to cruel captivity during the French Revolution in Rochefort, where he became gravely ill and died.

28. St. Wenceslaus, martyr (†929/935 Stara Boleslav – Czech Republic).

St. Lawrence Ruiz and companions, martyrs (†1633-1637 Nagasaki - Japan).

Blessed Amalia Abad Casasempere, martyr (†1936). A housewife, known for her piety, she was imprisoned and executed by militia in Benillup, Spain.

29. St. Michael, St. Gabriel and St. Raphael, Archangels.

St. Maurice, abbot (†1191). He humbly renounced the office of superior in the Cistercian monastery of Langonnet, France, but was shortly after elected abbot of Carnoët.

30. St. Jerome, priest and Doctor of the Church (†420 Bethlehem - Palestine).

St. Simon, monk (†1082). While Count of Crépy, France, he renounced his homeland, marriage and wealth to lead a hermetic life in the Jura Mountains.

The Sun Wants to Shine within Us

The sun needs only the smallest breach in order to spread its rays amidst the darkness. However, how often do we build walls that prevent this light from penetrating ambiances, edifices and even our own souls?



Maria Gómez

Let us imagine an imposing fortress that enjoys the privilege of being a vantage point for the most beautiful sunrises. Every day, without exception, while the sun silently tints the sky with the radiance of the dawn, it casts its first rays upon the walls of the structure, covering them with a golden light that adorns them with rare beauty.

As it appears on the horizon, the sun spreads its light so powerfully over this edifice that it reaches even its interior. Its glow is felt not only on the rough stones of the outer walls,

but also in the rooms and by the inhabitants of the castle. However, this penetrating generosity is not indiscreet, for its luminosity only enters where it encounters some opening through which to pour its benefits.

Not every castle is willing to open gates and windows for the sun to reign within them... Barriers are often built in order to prevent such beneficial influence. But not even then does the king of stars fail to exercise its majestic action on the walls of the building: all it needs is a small breach in order for the light to dominate the am-

biences where there had been only darkness.

At nightfall, the sun is no longer present in the firmament. The cold wind blows mercilessly against the fortress. However, the stones of the walls notice in themselves something peculiar... At that moment, they feel a characteristic that is not inherent to them: heat. Clearly, even if it is prevented from illuminating the castle, the sunlight does not stop warming it.

How delicate on the part of the noble daystar! It could have melted the rocks with its fire and inundated



Above, the walls of Avila (Spain); below, interior of the Church of San Benedetto in Piscinula, Rome, and external view of Turre Eburnea House, Caieiras (SP)

the fortress with its blazing rays. But it prefers the modesty of heating it discreetly, so that in the hours of darkness the stones would be left with the lingering remembrance of its marvelous effect. Thus it invites them, when the first signs of sunrise appear, to break down any barrier that rudely blocks the light.

Let us apply this metaphor to our spiritual life:

Is it not true that we often build up walls in our soul that close it to grace, to the action of God and Mary? Indeed, it is not unusual for us to set up barriers not of stone, but of banalities, whims, faults and attachments. And, unfortunately, such obstacles prevent the supernatural from penetrating our interior and the divine work from being realized.

When contrition and longing are aroused in us by God's gentle and insistent invitation, let us waste no time in breaking the yokes that subject us to the tyranny of the devil, the world and the flesh. Let us embrace with a generous and grateful heart so many gifts that Providence offers us, so that the depths of our souls may be a palace of light and splendour for the Most High. ✧

Shield and Sword of the Church

St. Michael led the fight against the demons in the “Prælium Magnum” and cast them into hell. This Archangel is, moreover, the head of the Guardian Angels of individuals and institutions – he being the Guardian Angel of the institution par excellence, the Holy Roman Apostolic Catholic Church.

In him, therefore, two missions are linked together. God chose to use the Prince of the Celestial Militia as a shield against the devil, and wants him to be equally the shield of men and of the Holy Church. However, the Archangel is also a sword; he is not limited to defending, but he also defeats and casts into hell. This is the double mission of St. Michael.

In the Middle Ages, he was considered the first among knights, the celestial, loyal, strong, pure and victorious knight, as must be the knight who puts all his trust in God and in Our Lady.

Such is the admirable figure of St. Michael, whom we must consider our ally in the battle to defend the Catholic Church.

Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira

