



HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

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*Two Vocations,
Just One Heart*

Prelude to the Vengeance upon the Serpent

***A**s true Israelites, Joachim and Anne had been, in due course, cleansed of original sin and lived in the state of grace. But the grandeur of the conception of the Mother of the Messiah required that they be raised to a degree of holiness and purification never before attained. Therefore, they had to be endowed with very particular gifts and virtues.*

In a way, the couple's mission surpassed that of the Angels themselves, for never did Our Lady address one of these as "mama" or "papa"...

Considering that the most excellent qualities of the chosen people converged in them, in what pertains to both natural and supernatural gifts, with a view to the full manifestation of these qualities in Our Lady and in the God-Man, it seems reasonable to hold that they too, in an even more perfect manner than Tobias and Sara, were purified of the concupiscence of the flesh before Mary's conception.

Moreover, since Our Lady is the universal Mediatrix of all graces – a mediation which, consequently, embraces the whole history of creation – would her own parents not be the first to benefit from this prerogative? This hypothesis presents itself as the most decorous and chaste mode of preparation for the dawn of Redemption, the Blessed Virgin's conception being the break of this dawn.



The Nativity of Our Lady - Basilica of Notre-Dame-du-Roncier - Josselin (France)

Francisco Lecaros

The Author believes that the work of Providence was completed in both of them on that occasion, so that concupiscence would in no way tarnish the couple's spirits in the begetting of Mary. Thus, the most chaste conception of Our Lady would be the prelude to the vengeance upon the serpent, which God had promised in Paradise: "She shall crush thy head" (Gn 3:15).

*CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio.
Maria Santíssima! O Paraíso de Deus revelado aos homens. [Mary Most Holy! God's Paradise Revealed to Men.] São Paulo: Arautos do Evangelho, 2020, v.II, p.68-69.*

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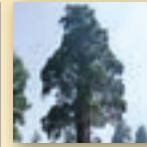
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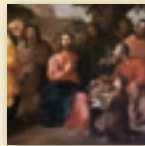
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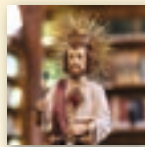
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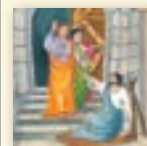
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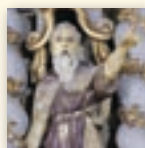
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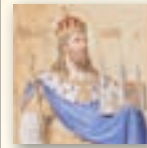
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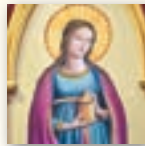
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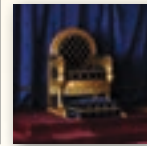
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OUR READERS WRITE



ARTICLE ON ANDRÉ ZIRNHELD

I would like to congratulate you on your splendid magazine and, in particular, for April's article on the French paratrooper André Zirnheld. Inspired by this story, I would like to recall that during the Second World War, the military chaplains of the American paratrooper regiments also jumped, as happened the night before "D-Day" in Normandy.

*Josep Ripoll Terrassa
Palma de Majorca – Spain*

"LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME"...

Reading one of the articles of the June issue of *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine, I was delighted to learn the true story of the little king and martyr Louis XVII! How is it possible that a frail and innocent eight-year-old child was able to face so much cruelty all by himself? And, after all that, to still say to those who tortured him, when asked what he would do if the kingdom of France was restored: "I would pardon you."

This is certainly a reflection of Our Lord's words on the Cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). What an example for us! "Let the children come to Me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the Kingdom of God" (Mk 10:14)!

*Maria Neuma de Souto
São Paulo – Brazil*

SAGACITY, PRUDENCE AND SHREWDNESS

A very interesting article, from last May, for its excellent didactic exposition, in the light of some biblical passages from the Old and New Testament, of the terms sagacity, prudence

and shrewdness, since often the concept we have of them is pejorative or, at least, not entirely clear.

In fact, in everyday life, to say of someone that he is sagacious, shrewd or prudent, is equivalent to relating him to an opportunistic person. But, as the writer explains, everything depends on the purpose for which these words are used, and they must always be at the service of the praise and glory of God and the fulfilment of His Law. It is then that sagacity, shrewdness and prudence are converted into virtue.

On the other hand, the definition "sagacity is prudence practised at high speed" deserves to figure among a collection of memorable phrases.

*Laura Viton
Via revistacatolica.org*

CARE WITH REGARD TO THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Last month's *Editorial: The Innocence and Heroism of Virtue* was magnificent. Today parents must be very careful about the education of their children. In public schools, and even in prominent private schools, the innocence of students, especially girls, is being threatened from an early age with the so-called teaching of gender ideology – even as a curriculum subject. It is a battle for the parents.

*Pedro Ricciardi
Via revistacatolica.com.br*

"A PROPHETIC MESSAGE"

Reflections on the prophecies of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in her apparitions remind us of the existence of the Kingdom of God and of hell. Through penance and conversion, it is possible to redirect our lives to the path of justice and truth. The prophecies announced: persecution of the Pope and the Church, worldwide catastrophes, pandemics

(COVID-19), etc. The purification of the world is necessary because of sin! In the face of all this, the way of hope opens up, with the maternal and solid promise: "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph."

*Milu Ríos Vela
Via revistacatolica.org*

"MOTHER CO-REDEMPTRIX"

I loved the article *The Mother Co-Redemptrix* from this past May. It is a very current topic, and we hope that our generation can witness the proclamation of the fifth Marian dogma, of Mary Co-Redemptrix, Advocate and Mediatrix of all graces.

It is only right that we should desire this; for previous dogmas, such as that of the Immaculate Conception, theologians, Popes and Saints were already convinced of the preservation of the Blessed Virgin Mary from original and all stain of sin, long before the dogma was proclaimed in 1854. As the article states, the Co-redemption is supported by the Magisterium of the Church and is present in popular piety.

Without Mary's *fiat*, Our Lord Jesus Christ would not have become incarnate. His human nature comes from her alone. We think of Mary as a Mother, but not just any mother: Mary is the Mother of God. And She is a woman, but not just any woman: She is the New Eve. If through the first Eve came sin, through Mary came the Redeemer. Moreover, Mary is Queen, with power in Heaven and on earth, and could have prevented the atrocities that were inflicted on her Son. Yet She allowed them, and suffered with Our Lord at the foot of the Cross, and there Christ himself named Her as Mother of all mankind. Mary Co-Redemptrix, pray for us.

*Jesús María Ferrando Valls
Via revistacatolica.org*

ENCOUNTERS AND CLASHES

Salvation history can be summarized in terms of providential encounters. Joshua, in the service of Moses from his youth (cf. Nm 11:28), received from him the mandate to bring the people into the Promised Land. Elijah, at the height of his vocation, met Elisha and left him double his spirit as his inheritance (cf. 2 Kgs 2:9). The mission of John the Baptist was so closely interwoven with that of the Divine Master that some thought he was Christ himself (cf. Lk 3:15).

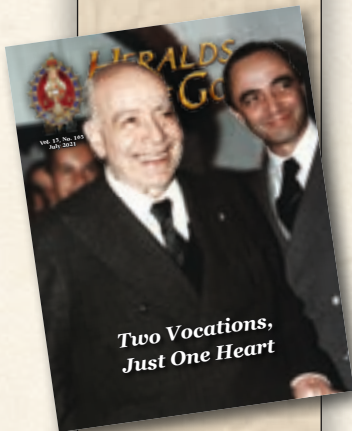
Jesus, for His part, “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), regardless of the place or circumstances: it could be at a tax collector’s booth, where He called the publican Matthew to abandon everything in order to find the true treasure; at Jacob’s well, where He quenched His thirst by winning the soul of the Samaritan woman; or in the dead of night, as in the eloquent dialogue with Nicodemus.

Later, St. Augustine’s encounter with St. Ambrose, that of St. Clare with St. Francis of Assisi, or that of St. John of the Cross with St. Teresa of Avila, would serve as illustrations of how the missions of providential men are completed and heightened in their encounter, particularly in the life of the founders. To a Benedictine, for example, sanctification consists largely in a personal relationship with “Father Benedict”; that is to say, for them sanctification is essentially a “Benedification”.

On the other hand, the life of providential men and women is also full of “clashes”: persecutions by tyrannies in every age, betrayals devised by malcontents and even conflicts with sectors of ecclesiastical power, as in the case of the infamous condemnation of St. Joan of Arc.

This month marks a very special date in the history of the Heralds of the Gospel and – why not say it? – of the Church. Exactly sixty-five years ago, on July 7, young João met his master, model and guide, Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. That first meeting in the Basilica of Our Lady of Carmel in São Paulo already contained the seeds of all the fruits that this work would later produce. In fact, it was precisely because of that union of hearts that many initiatives came to be born, such as, for example, the institution of a germ of community life, combining contemplation and action, from the entity’s early beginnings.

The lives of both were marked by many “clashes”, as has happened in the past within other foundations: misjudgements on the part of civil and ecclesiastical authorities, internal and external persecutions, betrayals of all kinds. But these “clashes” have never had and never will have any power against the unique and inseparable mission of both, for a very simple reason: providential men have been entrusted with a central role in the history of the Church, and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against her” (Mt 16:18). ✧



Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP, when a layman, with Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, in September of 1982

Photo: Mário Shinoda



Like a Blind Man by the Roadside...

Those who recognize the darkness of their blindness and understand that they lack eternal light, should cry from the depth of their hearts like the blind man of Jericho: “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!”

Our Redeemer, foreseeing that His Passion would trouble the souls of His Apostles, prepared them well in advance. He revealed the sufferings He would undergo and the glory of His Resurrection so that, seeing Him die as He had told them, they would not doubt that He would also resurrect.

However, because His disciples, being as yet carnal, could not understand the mystery of which He spoke to them, He had recourse to a miracle. Before their eyes, the sight of a blind man was opened to the light, so that this heavenly action would strengthen the faith of those who did not understand the words of the heavenly mystery.

*Symbol of the human race,
deprived of the light by sin*

Now it is necessary, dear brothers, to recognize in the miracles of the Lord Our Saviour, facts which we must believe have been effectively accomplished, but which, as signs, teach us something. For the works of the Lord testify, by their power, to certain truths, while by their mystery they proclaim others.

Observe that, if we restrict ourselves to the literal meaning, we do

not know who the blind man was of whom the Gospel speaks, but we do know what he symbolizes in the order of mystery.

The blind man is the human race: excluded from the joys of paradise in the person of its first father, deprived of the brightness of that superior light, it suffers the darkness of its condemnation; but finding the light thanks to its Redeemer's presence, it is able to glimpse the joys of the interior light, and desiring them, it enters upon the path of life through its good works. [...]

*Recognizing one's blindness is not
enough; one must cry out to Jesus*

It is with reason that this blind man is represented to us as both sit-

ting at the wayside and begging, because the Truth in person said: “I am the Way” (Jn 14:6).

He who does not know the brilliance of eternal light is therefore blind. But if he has begun to believe in the Redeemer, he is sitting by the wayside. However, if he neglects to pray and fails to beseech God to recover eternal light, the blind man is in fact seated by the wayside, but he does not beg. On the other hand, if he believes, and recognizes at the same time that his heart is blind and asks to recover the light of truth, then the blind man sits by the roadside and begs.

He, therefore, who recognizes the darkness of his blindness and understands that he lacks the light of eternity, must cry out from the depth of his heart; he must shout with all his might, imploring, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!” (Lk 18:38).

*Our Lord heeds those who
persevere in prayer*

But let us hear what happened while the blind man shouted: “Those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent” (Lk 18:39a). What do those who precede the arrival of Jesus represent, if not the crowd of carnal desires and the tempest of vices which, before the com-

*Excluded from
Paradise in the
person of Adam and
deprived of grace, the
human race became
blind, condemned
to darkness*

ing of Jesus into our heart, dissipate our thoughts by their assaults and hinder the appeals of our heart in prayer?

Often, indeed, when we want to return to the Lord after having sinned, and strive to overcome with prayer the vices of which we have been guilty, the memories of our past faults oppress our hearts; they dull our mind, disturb our soul and stifle the voice of our prayer. [...]

Let us consider what the blind man did then, before finding the light again. The text goes on to say: “but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (Lk 18:39b). Note well, he whom the crowd rebukes in order to silence cries again even more loudly; in the same way, the more the storm of carnal thoughts torments us, the more intensely we must pray.

The crowd wants to prevent us from shouting, for even during prayer do we suffer, besieged by the remembrance of our sins. But it is necessary that the voice of our heart persists all the more loudly, in proportion to the resistance which it meets, in order to control the storm of our guilty imagination, and thereby to move, by the very excess of our insistence, the Lord’s merciful ears. [...]

If we persevere insistently in our prayer, we cause Jesus who is passing by to stop in our soul. So it is added: “And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to Him” (Lk 18:40). [...]

“Lord, that I may see!”

Let us also observe what He says to the blind man who approaches: “What do you want Me to do for you?” (Lk 18:41a). Was He who had



Jesus cures the blind man of Jericho - Church of the Good Shepherd (Israel)

*As the blind man
cried out all the
louder when told to
be silent, we must
intensify the fervour
of our prayer in
our temptations*

the power to restore ignorant of what the blind man wanted? Of course not! But He wants us to make requests, although He knows beforehand what we will ask and what He will give us. He exhorts us to be persistent in our prayer, and thus affirms, “your Father knows what you need before you ask Him” (Mt 6: 8).

If He puts this question to us, it is so that we may make our petition to Him; if He inquires, it is to incite our hearts to prayer. So the blind man immediately responds, “Lord, that I may see!” (Lk 18:41b). What the blind man asks of the Lord is not gold, but light. He is not interested in obtaining anything other than light, for even though a blind person may possess something, he cannot, without light, see what he has.

Therefore, let us imitate, dear brothers, this man whose cure of body and soul we have just considered. Let us not ask the Lord for deceitful riches, earthly rewards, or transient honours, but for light; not the light circumscribed by space, limited by time, interrupted by night, and seen by animals as well as by us. Let us instead request that light which only Angels see with us, and which

has neither beginning nor end.

The way to reach this light is faith. It is therefore with reason that the Lord responds immediately to the blind man to whom He will give light: “Receive your sight! Your faith has made you well” (Lk 18:42). ✧

Excerpts from: ST. GREGORY THE GREAT. *Homilies on the Gospels*. Homily 2, pronounced in St. Peter’s Basilica 19/11/590 – Translation: Heralds of the Gospel

The multiplication of the loaves and fishes, by Francisco de Herrera el Viejo – Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Madrid



Reproduction

✠ GOSPEL ✠

¹ Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee. ² A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs He was performing on the sick. ³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. ⁴ The Jewish feast of Passover was near. ⁵ When Jesus raised His eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to Him, He said to Philip, “Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?” ⁶ He said this to test him, because He himself knew what He was going to do. ⁷ Philip answered Him, “Two hundred days’ wages worth of food

would not be enough for each of them to have a little.” ⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to Him, ⁹ “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?” ¹⁰ Jesus said, “Have the people recline.” Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. ¹² When they had had

their fill, He said to His disciples, “Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.” ¹³ So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign He had done, they said, “This is truly the Prophet, the One who is to come into the world.” ¹⁵ Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry Him off to make Him king, He withdrew again to the mountain alone (Jn 6:1-15).

God Always “multiplies the loaves”

In these troubled days, the scene of the multiplication of the loaves reminds us of an ever-present truth: we need only give God our best, and He will do the rest, surpassing all our expectations.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP



I – GOD IS CONCERNED WITH HIS CHILDREN

The celebration of the 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time invites us to survey a beautiful panorama, whose culmination is the scene of the multiplication of the loaves, narrated in the Gospel of St. John.

The other texts of the movable part of the Liturgy are in perfect harmony with this passage, as is the Collect itself, which summarizes the Church’s concern in increasing our trust in Providence, beseeching Him: “O God, protector of those who hope in You, without whom nothing has firm foundation, nothing is holy, bestow in abundance your mercy upon us and grant that, with You as our ruler and guide, we may use the good things that pass in such a way as to hold fast even now to those that ever endure.”¹

Indeed, the heavenly Father’s infinite love not only provides for the temporal needs of His children but also multiplies their spiritual gifts and makes them grow in fervour, piety and readiness to obey His will.

The first reading (2 Kgs 4:42-44), taken from the Second Book of Kings, offers for our con-

sideration an episode prefiguring the miracle described in the Gospel. With only twenty loaves of bread, the prophet Elisha feeds a hundred people, referring to the words of the Lord: “They shall eat and there shall be some left over” (4:43). The Responsorial Psalm emphasizes the goodness of the Most High in satisfying “the desire of every living thing” (Ps 145:16), never abandoning the children who hope in Him and faithfully invoke Him.

In the passage from the Letter to the Ephesians used for the second reading (Eph 4:1-6), St. Paul recalls the unity that exists among the members of Christ’s Mystical Body and exhorts us to preserve “the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace” (4:3). Peace is the tranquillity of order, as St. Augustine² defines it, and order will only exist if we live in complete dependence on the One who created us, redeemed us and sustains us at every step, and who pours out upon us an abundance of graces. Detaching ourselves from Him, we will inevitably enter into disorder, lose humility and meekness, and become incapable of patiently “bearing with one another through love” (4:2).

The infinite love of the heavenly Father not only provides for the temporal needs of His children but also multiplies their spiritual gifts and makes them grow in fervour

Order will only exist if we live in complete dependence on the One who created us, redeemed us and sustains us at every step, and who grants us an abundance of graces

In the context of today's Liturgy, however, the main message of the epistle is found in the final verses, where the Apostle emphasizes that there is "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism" (4:5), according to which there is "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (4:6).

Our Lord Jesus Christ considers as one body all those who sincerely seek Him, docile to the principle He himself gave: "seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness" (Mt 6:33). Upon these He pours forth a special love, giving them the rest in addition.

The inexhaustible munificence of a God who concerns himself with even the most trivial of our problems emerges marvellously in the Beloved Disciple's account, encouraging us to adopt an attitude of complete abandonment to Him.

II – THE MIRACLE FOREVER MARKS THOSE WHO WITNESS IT

If we could contemplate the daily life of St. John the Evangelist in the course of his fifteen

years of personal contact with Our Lady after the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, we would certainly be delighted to see Mother and son engaged in blessed conversations, in the course of which She taught him sublime truths and, at the same time, imparted to her interlocutor the subtleties of the art of conversation.

The Virgin Apostle must have developed this skill to perfection, and no doubt became strongly inclined to it, to such a point that a good part of his Gospel is composed on the basis of conversations. In the very first chapter, he records the testimony of John the Baptist and the meeting of the Divine Master with the first disciples, centring both facts on dialogue (cf. Jn 1:19-51); in a similar way he tells of the wedding at Cana (cf. Jn 2:1-11), the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus (cf. Jn 3:1-21), the conversion with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:1-42), among other episodes.

In dealing with the multiplication of the loaves, the only miracle recounted by all four Evangelists, he also describes it using this method, painting the scene in vivid and even picturesque colours.

Besides obeying a chronological sequence, he had a logical intention in placing this event as the opening of his sixth chapter, whose theme develops around the Eucharist.

The people seek Jesus

¹Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee.
²A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs He was performing on the sick.

From the accounts of St. Mark and St. Luke, we know that the Apostles had just returned from a mission in the villages of Galilee, where the Master had sent them "to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal" (Lk 9:2). Returning to Jesus in Capernaum, the Twelve "told Him all that they had done and taught" (Mk 6:30). Our Lord wanted to give them a few days' rest, so He set out with them "in the boat to a lonely place" (Mk 6:32). But many of the people noticed this, "and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them" (Mk 6:33).

The reason that drove the crowds to come in search of the Redeemer is clearly indicated by St. John: the restoration of health to the sick. For



Thiago Tamura

Jesus cures the man blind from birth - St. Francis Xavier Cathedral of Green Bay (WI)

Jesus always responded to those who approached Him with faith and asked for healing. Being the Divine Physician, He did not even take into consideration whether the disease was serious, rare, contagious or of unknown cause; He healed everyone with just a gaze, the laying on of hands, or by a simple desire. Sometimes, the one in need only had to touch the hem of His garment to be instantly cured!

Naturally, this made a strong impression on the people, especially because such miracles proved that He was a prophet, whose words were to be believed.

Our Lord sees the crowd from afar

³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples.

⁴ The Jewish feast of Passover was near.

^{5a} When Jesus raised His eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to Him...

The scene is extremely compelling: Our Lord on the mountain, no doubt seated on an elevation, teaching new wonders, and the disciples seated on the grass around Him, listening with entire captivation.

The Master was looking at them as He spoke. At a certain moment He lifted His gaze above the heads of His listeners and caught sight of the advancing crowd in the distance. What beauty this detail holds: the God-Man raises His eyes and for the first time contemplates with His bodily eyes that crowd which He has known from all eternity!

The reference to the feast of the Passover, in verse 4, allows us to calculate how varied and numerous was this contingent of Jews who had walked from Capernaum in search of Our Lord. At that time of the year, this city became the meeting point of pilgrims coming from the north of Palestine, who would gather there in caravans in order to continue on to Jerusalem. Therefore, the multitudinous procession was composed for the most part of travellers, inexperienced regarding the distances and provisions necessary for travelling in the region.

An ideal situation to stimulate faith

^{5b} ...He said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" ⁶ He

said this to test him, because He himself knew what He was going to do.⁷ Philip answered Him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little."

As the three Evangelists recount, Our Lord received the crowd with compassion, for they were like "sheep without a shepherd" (Mk 6:34), and He began to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick (cf. Lk 9:11). It is likely that several hours passed while everyone, amazed, followed His words and gestures within a supernatural atmosphere so intense that no one thought of hunger or fatigue.

Only when daylight began to decline did the disciples urge Jesus to disperse the people, so that they might make their way to the surrounding villages to buy food (cf. Mt 14:15). But He answered them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat" (Mt 14:16). And it was then that, turning to Philip, He put the question to him, as if to say, "And now, how shall we resolve this problem?"

As St. John himself observes, Our Lord "knew what He was going to do." In fact, besides possessing divine knowledge, on account of being the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Soul of Jesus has always been in the beatific vision, and therefore, from the first instant of His conception in the virginal womb of Mary, He contemplated all events in God.

Thus, in His question to Philip, the Redeemer was not seeking concrete information on where loaves of bread were sold by the thousands, but rather to broaden the Apostle's horizons, encouraging him to grow in faith.

Faced with the evident impossibility of remedying the situation by ordinary, conventional means, he should have said: "Master, there is no human solution; nevertheless, we are in Your hands. You are Lord of these hungry people, and Lord of all sustenance. If it be your will, You can satisfy this multitude."

Philip, however, did not pass the test well. His response to the Master amounted to little other than a protest: "Lord, please, do not even raise this issue! Send these people away, and quickly, otherwise they are going to faint right here!"

When the Evangelist set the fact down in writing, some sixty years later, he must have taken delight in recalling the scene and, when he finished

Our Lord received that great multitude out of compassion, for those people were like "sheep without a shepherd"

In His question to Philip, the Redeemer was not seeking information on where loaves of bread were sold by the thousands, but rather to broaden the Apostle's horizons, encouraging him to grow in faith



Multiplication of the five loaves and two fish - St. Oswald Parish, Sankt Oswald bei Freistadt (Austria)

these verses, perhaps he thought to himself, smiling: "Poor Philip!"

God desires our collaboration

⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to Him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?"

The other Apostles were doubtless following the exchange of words between Jesus and Philip, and some of them had already checked to see if there were any food vendors among the crowd. The only one found was a boy offering barley loaves, inferior to wheat bread and generally eaten by the poor, and fish, salted and dried according to local custom. We can imagine him carrying the merchandise in a small basket with two compartments, and loudly proclaiming the good price, until the moment that Andrew called him and asked how many loaves and fish he had with him. Noting the small amount available, ridiculous for the thousands in need of food, the Apostle intervenes in the conversation, transmitting the information he has gathered and reinforcing Philip's position.

Our Lord proceeded in this way, drawing the attention of the Twelve to the crowd's need for food, so that they would clearly recognize the miraculous origin of the exorbitant number of loaves of bread that they themselves would soon be distributing. Otherwise, they might not even have noticed what was happening and, as is natural, they would have soon begun to circulate completely mistaken explanations as to the origin of the food, perhaps even attributing the ingenuity to a spectacular local baker.

It should also be noted that Jesus did not need either the five loaves or the two fish, since His will was sufficient to perform any prodigy. However, God wants to act with human collaboration. We should always give whatever is within our reach, confident that He will provide the rest.

Divine courtesy

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people recline." Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number.

What stands out in this verse is Our Lord's extraordinary kindness and sense of order; this example would later give rise to courtesy in social relations, reaching successive summits in the Middle Ages and the *Ancien Régime*. He could have fed the people hurriedly, especially as evening was falling. Instead, He proceeded calmly, as in a ceremony, without any frenzy or rush. This is why He had everyone sit down "in groups, by hundreds and by fifties" (Mk 6:40).

As to the number of those present, it is important to note a detail recorded only by St. Matthew: there were five thousand men, "besides women and children" (14:21). If we consider that each man would have been accompanied by his respective family, and that at that time offspring were usually numerous, it does not seem exaggerated to calculate a gathering of at least thirty thousand people.

Jesus gives thanks for the food

¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted.

A model of courteous treatment towards others, Jesus is also, and above all, towards the

Most High. In His human nature, He expresses gratitude to the Father for having brought those five loaves and two fish into His hands, teaching us, with this gesture, that it is indispensable to always duly acknowledge all that we have received from God.

This is a fundamental lesson for the harmony of family life, and a condition for never lacking food: giving thanks to God at every meal. Prayer at this moment places us in an attitude of detachment with regard to any personal efforts made to obtain our nourishment, reminding us of our complete dependence on the Lord.

It is not difficult to imagine the contentment of those who, seated on the grass, were the object of Our Lord's care. With the help of His disciples (cf. Mt 14:19), He himself began to serve, giving the hungry "as much as they wanted." However, the quantity of loaves and fishes exceeded even the needs of their appetite at that moment, and it is plausible to think that

many people carried home more than they ate there.

It is worth considering that Jesus could have multiplied fruit, meat or eggs, but He preferred bread and fish because they are symbolic foods. The first, because it pointed to the Eucharist; the second, for the reason that it represented the apostolate of the Church, as He had promised the Apostles: "I will make you become fishers of men" (Mk 1:17).

The Redeemer does not desire the perdition of anyone

¹²When they had had their fill, He said to His disciples, "Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." ¹³So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat.

Anyone who saw the enthusiasm of those people would think that from then on they would all accept Jesus' teachings. But that is not what happened

Far from indicating a mundane principle of tidiness, good manners or environmental preservation, this order of the Divine Redeemer was given for very lofty reasons.

One of them, St. Thomas teaches,³ was to furnish the disciples with proof of the reality of the miracle, and for this reason exactly twelve baskets were left over, so that each Apostle was obliged to carry one. Another motive was to show His zeal for those who are not "leftovers", but His fellow men, that is, each one of us. Our Lord wants to save all men, but He can only gather to himself those who do not offer resistance to His action.

St. John mentions only "the fragments from the five barley loaves," omitting the fish. Various authors agree that, although the Eucharist was not instituted there, the Evangelist wished to allude to the care and veneration due to the



Francisco Lecaros

Multiplication of the loaves and fishes - Library of Yuso Monastery, San Millán de la Cogolla (Spain)

The solution for all social, political, financial, moral and even epidemiological problems lies in returning to Christian life, the life of the Sacraments, the life of piety

fragments of consecrated Hosts, in which Jesus is present in Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity even when the celebration is over, and which, therefore, cannot be discarded.

They recognize the Prophet...

¹⁴ When the people saw the sign He had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the One who is to come into the world."

At that time, a prophet only enjoyed credibility among the people if he confirmed the truth of his words by performing a miracle. This is why St. John uses the word "sign", showing that in this phenomenon Our Lord was offering the Jews a guarantee: "I have multiplied the loaves and fishes that you may believe in Me."

Amazed at the food distributed by Jesus – they were the most delicious loaves in history! – the crowd recognized Him as the Messiah, the awaited Saviour, and began to acclaim Him.

Anyone who saw the enthusiasm of those people would think that from then on they would all accept Jesus' teachings and act accordingly. But that is not what happened.

...but do not wish to surrender themselves to Him

¹⁵ Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry Him off to make Him king, He withdrew again to the mountain alone.

Jesus Christ is King, and in a certain respect the people did not err in attempting to proclaim Him as such. Therefore, what led Our Lord to withdraw was not, as some suppose, an ill-conceived humility by which one must reject all honour or praise merited, but the state of mind under which those Jews were acting. They wished to elevate the Redeemer to the throne, and to establish with Him distant relations, like those between a monarch and his subjects, without committing themselves to loving and obey-



Multiplication of the loaves and fishes - Church of Sts. Gordianus and Epimachus, Merzhofen (Germany)

ing Him in everything. As sovereign, He would promulgate a few laws, establish taxes and govern Israel, but would not directly interfere in anyone's life.

If, on the contrary, the crowd had exclaimed: "This is truly our God and Creator, our Lord! Let us give ourselves entirely to Him," Jesus would not have taken His leave.

Those thousands of men, women and children were marked for the rest of their lives by that miracle of the Divine Master. Probably some rejected Him to the point that when He stood before Pilate's praetorium, they raised their voices and shouted: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" (Jn 19:6).

However, after seeing Him nailed to a cross, perhaps they came down from Calvary beating their breasts and weeping, and remembered that sign which had shown them God's will so clearly and which they had refused.



Tiago K. Galvão

Our Lady of Good Counsel – Shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Genazzano (Italy)

III – THE SOLUTION FOR ALL OF OUR PROBLEMS

In today's Gospel we contemplate Our Lord Jesus Christ as the source of true harmony among people, of good relations, of the commitment to do good to others. He shows His love for each of us and invites us to imitate Him, to be concerned for our brothers and sisters, just as He is for us.

We must be preachers of the truth, never missing an opportunity to lead others to take advantage of the treasure that Our Lord brought to earth: grace. Under its influence, humanity reached great heights of perfection in the past; today, in the midst of a terrible spiritual desert, it is up to us to work so that humanity will return home to the Catholic Church, which never fails to multiply the loaves and fishes necessary to feed the souls of its children.

The solution to all social, political, financial, moral and even epidemiological problems lies in returning to Christian life, the life of the Sac-

raments, the life of piety, the life in which Our Lord Jesus Christ will be our Life. Therein lies the solution for everything!

Let us remember that God has entrusted His omnipotence into Our Lady's hands, giving us the joy of being able to count on a maternal intervention in our favour. If we are with Her, we will lack neither bread nor fish; but most of all, we will never lack Jesus. ✧

*If we remain
with Our
Lady, we will
lack neither
bread nor fish;
but most of
all, we will
never lack
Jesus*

¹ 17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME. Collect. In: THE ROMAN MISSAL. English translation according to the Third Typical Edition approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011, p.477.

² Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. De Civitate Dei. L.XIX, c.13, n.1. In: *Obras*. Madrid: BAC, 1958, v.XVII, p.1398.

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Super Ioannem*, c.VI, lect.1.

“I have made you the father of many nations”

One hundred and fifty years ago, Pius IX confirmed St. Joseph as patron of the Church. In the light of the texts compiled by the Liturgy in honour of the Holy Patriarch, let us consider the theological teachings contained in his title.



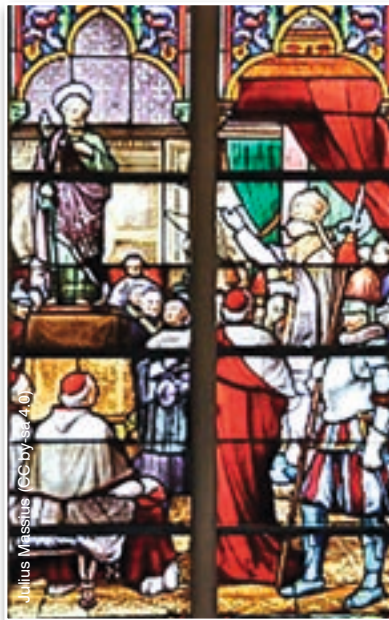
Daniel Vinicius Almeida da Paixão

Father; a single word which nevertheless denotes so much honour. It is often among of the first that is heard from the lips of a child; not infrequently, one of the last that a man utters before leaving this earthly life, as, in fact, the God-Man himself did: “Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this He breathed His last” (Lk 23:46).

The man who assumes the spiritual care of a newly baptized child is given the title of *godfather*. And if this were not enough to indicate the importance of this term, we could add the linguistic detail that the Latin form, *pater*, is the root of many other significant words: the property of a family, left as inheritance, is called *patrimony*; love of one’s homeland and the willingness to defend it is called *patriotism*, a model to be imitated is called a *pat-tern*; finally, one to whose help one has recourse is invoked as a *patron*.

The “father-guardian”

What relation, then, does the figure of a patron have with that of a father?



St. Joseph is declared Patron of the Universal Church - St. Nicholas Church, Wasquehal (France)

The concept of *patron* is succinctly presented as “the Saint whose name one bears, or under whose invocation a church is dedicated; or whom a country, a city, a fraternity or a community claims as its protector.”¹ Based on this definition, the

role of the one we regard as a patron takes the form of a father-guardian, to whom we bind ourselves and in whom we place our trust.

It is certainly honourable for Saints to have many souls who come to the waters of Baptism under the protection of their name, or adopt it upon entering the consecrated life. Perhaps even more outstanding is a patron to whom a religious community or a diocese, an entire city or a country is entrusted.

But what can be said of one whom all the faithful invoke as Patron of the Holy Catholic Church? No man would ever be able to bear a title of such grandeur... except the one who, on this earth, was called “my father” by God!

The Church clamours for its father

The present year, 2021, is dedicated to the veneration of the Glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, in commemoration of the 150 years that have passed since the Holy Father, Pius IX, declared him Patron of the Universal Church.

The almost thirty-two years of that Pontiff’s reign still mark history



Eucharistic celebration in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil).
Inset, St. Joseph - private collection

today because of the events that took place during that period, both in the political and ecclesiastical spheres. We shall not dwell on them here, nor even enumerate them all, but perhaps the simple recollection of occasions such as the First Vatican Council, the proclamation of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and pontifical infallibility, the wars and liberal revolutions and the loss of the Papal States, exemplifies the tremendous convergence of circumstances, both glorious and tragic, that the Church and all of society experienced in that second half of the nineteenth century.

In this context, Catholics could not fail to recognize that the Barque of Peter, sailing towards the twentieth century – so often mentioned in prophecies of preceding centuries – was bound to pass through stormy seas, and that it was indispensable to entrust it to a special patronage, perhaps more necessary than ever before.

Thus, at the end of the year 1870, the Sacred Congregation of Rites responded to the clamorous supplication of the faithful:

“Seeing that in these most troubled times the same Church is everywhere beset by her enemies and is oppressed by such great calamities that the wicked seem to make the gates of hell prevail over her, the venerable Bishops of the

The Barque of Peter was to pass through stormy seas and it was indispensable to entrust it to a special patronage

whole Catholic world, in their own name and that of the faithful entrusted to them, have raised their prayers to the Supreme Pontiff, that he may deign to make St. Joseph Patron of the Catholic Church.

“And when these petitions and wishes were renewed with greater impetus during the Sacred Ecumen-

ical Vatican Council, our Most Holy Pope Pius IX, moved by the lamentable state of these times, in order to place himself and all the faithful under the most powerful patronage of the Patriarch St. Joseph, desired to heed the wishes of the Bishops and solemnly declared him Patron of the Catholic Church.”²²

This decree, entitled *Quemadmodum Deus*, and dated December 8, 1870, was ratified by the Roman Pontiff on July 7, 1871, with the Apostolic Letter *Inclytum Patriarcha*, for which reason the present month of July is especially appropriate for the veneration of our incomparable patron.

But one question inevitably arises: what was the basis for attributing this name to the spouse of Mary Most Holy? Was it an arbitrary decision of the Supreme Pontiff or perhaps a spontaneous reaction of Catholics harried by persecution? Not only would it seem irreverent to affirm this, but it would be blasphemous to disregard the luminous action of the Holy Spirit in this historical fact and, above all, the profound theology behind this title.

In reality, it would not be out of place for the Holy Father to entrust the flock of Christ to St. Michael, the Prince of the heavenly hosts; or to St. Peter and St. Paul, the pillars of the Roman Church; or to St. John the Baptist, of whom the Saviour claimed that there was no greater man among those born of women (cf. Lk 7:28). The Church has always counted on these and many other patron Saints. Nevertheless, like her Divine Founder before her, persecuted by Herod and a fugitive in Egypt, the Church needs her father's aid in this difficult historical period.

This brings us to the theological question: how can we explain the paternity of St. Joseph in relation to Holy Church?

The new Abraham: true father of the God-Man

It would be futile to explain the mystery of this paternity if we fail to consider that it is not associated with blood ties, as the first idea of "father" suggests. In St. Joseph, this term takes on another tenor.

Among the biblical passages presented by the Liturgy for the Solemnity of the Glorious Patriarch on March 19, there is a passage from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, which calls the attention of the faithful to a curious detail which, at first sight, appears to have no connection with the Saint being celebrated: the Apostle refers to the figure of Abraham!

"The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the Law but through the righteousness of faith. [...] That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants – not only to the adherents of the Law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all" (Rom 4:13, 16).

The fact is that this text contains a profound and mysterious

relationship, through which the Church's Liturgy takes the Patriarch of the Chosen People as prefigure of the Patriarch of the New Covenant. This analogy between the two great men of the faith was pointed out in the twelfth century by the Benedictine Rupert, Abbot of the monastery of Deutz:

"Of all those to whom the promise of the Incarnation was made, the first was Abraham, and the last Joseph. The genealogy of the Saviour does not lead to Mary, which would be in accordance with the fact that it is She who gives Him birth in the flesh; but, in accordance with a divine kinship, it leads to Joseph who – although not

Like the spiritual motherhood of Mary, so the fatherhood of St. Joseph is extended in a mystical way throughout the whole Church

being Christ's father by the flesh, but by faith – was the last heir of the aforementioned promise."³

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Holy Liturgy brings to light the figure of Abraham in the commemoration of St. Joseph, since in both of them God's Covenant with the chosen man goes beyond the bond of the Law and is placed on the plane of grace. Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP, comments on the same passage from Paul:

"The permanence of a lineage cannot be based on blood, but rather on a divine foundation that makes it eternal; namely, on grace. [...] Therefore, there is a higher level than the natural or human level; a family constituted by faith and not blood. [...]

As the descendent of David, all the promises of the Covenant are fulfilled in St. Joseph. He is father of Jesus through the Faith inherited from Abraham, which he brought to perfection. The bond between him and the Redeemer is a relationship of faith."⁴

Church history has seen not a few who, refusing to accept a paternity exempt from the carnal bond, have invented theories which have discredited the divine manner in which the Messiah was conceived, and even the virginity of the Mother of God and of her immaculate Spouse.

Theology, however, teaches us that St. Joseph' paternity towards the Divine Saviour was new, unique and singular, of a higher order than the natural or adoptive paternity of ordinary men.⁵ And the chastity on which it is built not only makes it purer, but even more authentic, according to the judgement of St. Augustine: "*Maior puritas confirmet paternitatem. [...] Quia tanto firmitus pater, quanto castius pater – His greater purity confirms his fatherhood. [...] For the more surely he is a father, the more chastely he is a father.*"⁶

"Our father, before Him in whom he believed"

Given that the Glorious Patriarch is in fact the virginal father of Jesus, his relationship to the Holy Church follows as a consequence: "Just as Mary's spiritual motherhood in relation to all men is but the complement and prolongation of her natural motherhood of Jesus, so the fatherhood of St. Joseph, which he exercised naturally in relation to Christ, is prolonged in a mystical way. It is therefore necessary that the authority and paternal care which St. Joseph exercised in the Holy Family, the first nucleus of the Church, be extended marvellously throughout the whole Church."⁷

Thus, the great title of Patron of Church bestowed on St. Joseph has its foundation in an even deeper dignity: since he is truly the father of Christ, the Head of the divine institution He founded, he cannot but be the true father of His Body.⁸

We see then how in St. Joseph the words of St. Paul to the Romans are more perfectly fulfilled, as he continues in his epistle: “as it is written, ‘I have made you the *father of many nations*’ (Gn 17:5) – in the presence of the God in whom he believed [...] In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, ‘So shall your descendants be’ (Gn 15:5). [...] That is why his faith was ‘reckoned to him as righteousness’” (Rom 4:17-18, 22).

Through his faith in accepting such a high mission entrusted by the Eternal Father, St. Joseph did not receive “only” the name of *father of Jesus* – which is already above any merit of a created being – but he became the father of a numerous posterity, that is, “the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by His Blood,”⁹ as is said in a well-known prayer of Leo XIII to the Holy Patriarch.

Let us ask for the intervention of this omnipotent father

In this year 2021, which is no less calamitous than the time when the



St. Joseph, Patriarch of the Church - Minor Basilica of St. Joseph's Oratory, Montreal

Mystical Spouse of Christ was entrusted to St. Joseph, what should Catholics do, then, who are struggling to defend the integrity of the Faith and the purity of customs? Let us heed the advice of the Magisterium:

“May he, St. Joseph, with his fatherly providence and powerful intercession always help you and your family; let us say omnipotent intercession, because that is what must be said. It could be observed that this word ‘omnipotent’ is applied to the intercession of Mary Most Holy. But we dare affirm that it ought first of all to be applied to St. Joseph. [...] Since the head of the house was St. Joseph himself, this intercession cannot be less than omnipotent, for what could Jesus and Mary possibly deny to St. Joseph, they to whom he literally consecrated his whole life, and who

truly owe to him the means of their earthly existence?”¹⁰

Confiding in this omnipotent intervention – and we hope that it will come soon! – in the year of St. Joseph, the persevering Catholic should pray to him that the world may recognize the paths that it has been treading and, in light of the Psalm applied by the Liturgy to the Patriarch of the Church, consider the recent events they have experienced: “If his children forsake my Law and do not walk according to my ordinances,

if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges” (Ps 89:30-32).

We must also beseech him that the Mystical Body of Christ, of which he is the father, may be defended from the snares of its adversaries, as the same Psalm says: “The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him” (Ps 89:22-23).

Finally, may he protect his blessed posterity, those over whom hovers the promise of his Divine Son that they shall not perish under the infernal powers (cf. Mt 16:18). Concerning this posterity, it has been prophesied: “I will establish his line for ever and his throne as the days of the heavens” (Ps 89:29). ✧

¹ PATRON. In: GLAIRE, Jean-Baptiste; WALSH, Joseph-Alexis (Dir.). *Encyclopédie catholique*. Paris: Parent-Desbarres, 1847, t.XV, p.447.

² SACRED CONGREGATION OF RITES. *Quemadmodum Deus*: ASS 6 (1870), 193-194.

³ RUPERTO DE DEUTZ. De divinis officiis, c.XIX. In:

CANALS VIDAL, Francisco (Ed.). *San José en la fe de la Iglesia. Antología de textos*. Madrid: BAC, 2007, p.16-17.

⁴ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, v.VII, p.44.

⁵ Cf. LLAMERA, OP, Bonifacio. *Teología de San José*. Madrid: BAC, 1953, p.92-102.

⁶ ST. AUGUSTINE. Sermo 51. In: *Obras Completas*. Madrid: BAC, 1983, v.X, p.42-43.

⁷ BOVER, SJ, José Maria. *De cultu S. Ioseph amplificando. Theologica disquisitio*. Barcelona: Eugenius Subirana, 1926, p.49-50.

⁸ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *São José: quem o conhece?...* [St. Joseph: Who

Knows Him?...] São Paulo: Lumen Sapientiae, 2017, p.412.

⁹ LEO XIII. *Prayer to St. Joseph*: ASS 22 (1889-1890), 117.

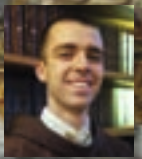
¹⁰ PIUS XI. Allocuzione nella festività di San Giuseppe, 19/3/1938. In: *L'Osservatore Romano*. Città del Vaticano. Year LXXXVIII. N.66 (March 21-22, 1938); p.1.

Blas de Lezo: the “Mediohombre”

A man reduced to only half of his natural movement left an unforgettable lesson for history, defeating the “invincible” English naval forces in Cartagena de Indias.

(CC by-sa 4.0)

Gabriel Borges



The Mediterranean Sea serenely watched the approach of another storm. It was the dawn of August 24, 1704 and two imposing armadas faced one another near Gibraltar, on the southern coast of Andalusia. On one side, the English and the Dutch formed a formidable fleet “consisting of sixty ships of the line and several frigates, with a total of three thousand six hundred cannons and almost twenty-three thousand men.”¹ On the other side, setting out to conquer the strait, the French and Spanish united their banners under the orders of Louis Alexandre de Bourbon, Count of Toulouse and son of Louis XIV himself, and battling on behalf of His Majesty Philip V, grandson of the Sun-King, who had recently ascended to the throne of Spain. It was the beginning of the War of Spanish Succession.

The forces were evenly matched. At ten o'clock in the morning the last orders sounded, the ships manoeuvred and arranged themselves, on both sides, in three blocks, in order to bar the advance of the enemy.

On the French-Spanish flagship, a young fifteen-year-old officer was inspecting a line of cannons. A cold sweat stood on his forehead, but with a firm step, a serious countenance and a decided voice, he inspired respect and maintained his authority, while inside himself he repressed a rebellious fear. The intense silence that precedes great calamities announced the final seconds before the general deflagration, and it gripped his heart. He felt the emotions of the baptism of fire; it was his first battle.

The muffled and grave roar of the first cannons shots could be heard in the distance. This was soon followed by flames, tremors, smoke and destruction. Cannon balls were flying, the sides of the ship were shaking, and with them the men. The voice of command could only be heard with difficulty: “Fire!”

Where was the young officer? A ruthless ball of lead had carried away half his left leg. He was rushed to the “operating room” – a euphemism for the terrible, poorly lit amputation table which, below sea level, accommodated the wounded in battle. It dripped with blood.

All the surgeon’s skill was measured against a stopwatch, because the longer it took, the greater the danger of the patient not being able to withstand the bleeding or contracting an infection.

They placed the young man on the operating table. A good portion of brandy was poured down his throat; then a leather band placed between his teeth – that was the anaesthetic.

The operation began by extracting the last pieces of flesh that were still hanging below the knee. Then, with a saw, the tibia and fibula were trimmed. Finally, the stump was submerged in boiling pitch to staunch the haemorrhage. All this in less than a minute.

The boy endured these horrors with exemplary bravery, the echo of which reached the ears of Louis XIV. Astonished, the French king awarded him the title of *Alférez de Vajel de Alto Bordo*, to which Philip V added other honours.

This young hero from the modest aristocracy of Pasajes de San Pedro in the northern Spanish province of Guipúzcoa, was called Blas de Lezo y Olavarrieta.

Life at sea

How would a fifteen-year-old react after such a misfortune? Surely he would suffer an irreversible trauma and abandon the career that he had hardly had the opportunity to begin.

But this was not the 21st century. Blas de Lezo was already contemplating many other adventures. If his life dated back to medieval times, modern man would reckon it among the legends; however, as he was born in February 1689,² we can list him among the heroes and accurately narrate here his fascinating story.

Blas learned to move around nimbly on a very awkward wooden leg, which soon earned him his first nickname: “*anka-motz*” in the Basque language or, in Spanish, “*pata-palo*,”³ peg-leg. After being trained to walk and even to ride horseback with it, he was admitted back on board.

His name reappears in history during a mission to defend the city of Peñíscola, where he took part in the burning of an English ship with sixty cannons. In August 1705, he was summoned to the aid that the Franco-Spanish navy would render to the city of Barcelona, besieged by the opponents of Philip V. There we see him at the helm of a small vessel, surrounded by English ships. The daring officer ordered the use of “red bullets”, lead balls heated in the ship’s furnace. He set fire to an enemy ship and escaped the siege amid clouds of smoke.

Thirsting for feats beyond mere duty, *Don* Blas de Lezo was assigned as a ship’s lieutenant, at the age of only eighteen, in defence of the Fort of *Santa Catalina* in Tólon, from which he spotted a powerful English fleet approaching. Providence seemed to be testing the courage of the lame young man, who this time had the misfortune of losing his left eye. But he also survived this dangerous injury, which could have cost him his life.



That “*mediohombre*” did not consider himself sufficiently incapacitated to be excused, in conscience, from duty and adventure

Above, Blas de Lezo - Naval Museum of Madrid; previous page, *Combat between a Spanish frigate and the British ship Stanhope*, by Ángel Cortellini Sánchez Naval Museum of Madrid

Did he abandon a career so exposed to what some would call “unwarranted” risks? No. In 1714, he was at the helm of the seventy-cannon ship *Nuestra Señora de Begoña*, also known as *Campanela*, with which he took part in the bombardment of the city of Barcelona during the civil war raging in Spain. In one of those raids, Blas lost the movement of his right forearm, as bones and tendons were destroyed.

That “*mediohombre* [half-a-man]”, pursued and so often grazed by death, nevertheless did not consider himself sufficiently incapacitated to be excused, in conscience, from duty and adventure.

On February 3, 1737, he set sail on a new mission, in command of a con-

voy with two main ships: *Conquistador* and *Fuerte*. His destination: America. For the second time, Blas was crossing the Atlantic. Such voyages were far from easy ones, but at that time they provided long periods of silence and reflection. In this enormous and harmonious cloister called the sea, how many premonitions must that analytical captain not have felt? The greatest challenge of his life awaited him on the other side of the ocean.

Cartagena de Indias

On March 11, Blas set foot on dry land. At a glance, he took in the formidable Bay of Cartagena and the sorry state of the fortifications. There was no time to lose. This city, the key point of Spanish colonization in Latin America, had been the target of a series attacks and threats.⁴ And the forecasts for the future were not encouraging. A Spanish spy, known by the nickname of *El paisano*, had obtained very reliable and precise information in Jamaica that the English intended to overthrow Spanish trade and dominion, with Cartagena de Indias as one of their main targets.

Raising the spirits of an indolent garrison, Blas reinforced the city’s defence. He worked “not as if he were a commander, but as the least of the cabin boys,”⁵ serving as a model and an encouragement to everyone.

The commander of the fleet’s plans for to repair and expansion were well underway when the arrival of the viceroy of New Granada, *Don* Sebastián de Eslava y Lasaga, was announced. A learned and experienced military man, full of conceit for his great reputation at court, he seemed almost the antithesis of Blas de Lezo, who could hardly hide his disappointment on hearing his first words. He watched the viceroy complain about the voyage and moan about his aches and pains, while an astonished crew quietly un-



With more than a hundred and seventy ships and thirty thousand men, the English fleet approached Cartagena de Indias and Vernon gave the order to open fire on its walls

Portrait of Edward Vernon, by Thomas Gainsborough - National Portrait Gallery, London

loaded the ship. One hundred and fifty bodies had been thrown overboard along the way, victims of starvation and scurvy.

It had indeed been a terrible voyage. But a sailor like Blas – for whom hunger, scurvy and enemy fire were nothing new, and the privations of long voyages meant nothing more than the duties of the trade – could not muster any sympathy for a commander who assumed his position amid whining and lamentations...

Blas, however, went ahead and informed Eslava of the state of the de-

fences of Cartagena, and, above all, conveyed to him the latest news of the English advance. “It is nothing! If anything happens, their objective will surely be Havana and not Cartagena,” replied the viceroy.

Until the very end, Eslava would be from the school of obstinate optimists. Regarding the work done by Blas de Lezo, he did no more than note deficiencies – well observed, in fact – with a friendly smile.

First threats

On March 13, 1740, a small English squadron appeared on the horizon and opened fire to draw the defenders out of their positions and show their strength. But Edward Vernon, commander of the English fleet, knew that it was not yet the opportune moment for the assault. He was waiting for reinforcements and merely wanted to reconnoitre the city. During this waiting period he entrusted his men with other missions in the vicinity, so that the echo of small conquests would resound loudly in the British Parliament to the honour of his name.

The fleet then returned to Jamaica for the last preparations before the attack on Cartagena de Indias. There it received considerable reinforcements, bringing it to “a total of more than one hundred and seventy ships and thirty thousand men.”⁶

Meanwhile, repairs and additions to the fortifications of Cartagena continued. Wooden bastions were erected, walls extended and the enor-

mous iron chain that prevented entry to the bay was inspected. Eslava, who “was not yet fully convinced of the eventuality of the English attack,” completed the work that *Don Blas de Lezo* been carrying out for years but “even so, without acknowledging his efforts.”⁷

The Spanish, for their part, had received no major reinforcements. They possessed only six warships, with four hundred and sixty pieces of artillery.

The English assault begins

The probable storm became reality: on March 13, 1741, the sails of nearly one hundred and eighty vessels billowed on the horizon.

The English fleet approached and hemmed in the entire coast right up to just south of the city. Along the way it opened fire on the walls, destroying the batteries of *Chamba*, *San Felipe* and *Santiago*.

Blas de Lezo was in the Fortress of *San Luis de Bocachica*, an important edifice that defended the entrance to the bay to the south. From there he asked Eslava for three hundred men. The latter grudgingly sent him one hundred and fifty, ordering them to return to the city on the following day...

On March 20 the most feared possibility materialized: the English initiated a landing to assault the Fortress of *San Luis*, incomparably more vulnerable by land. With a large contingent of Jamaican natives – about a

thousand of them – they began to set up a first camp and a battery.

As they continued their land advance, Vernon ordered his forces to bombard the fortress. They were often driven back by artillery from the ramparts and the battery of *San José*, which was also steadily firing from behind the opening called the *Bocachica*. In one day this battery was rendered completely useless. However, to the amazement of the invaders, it opened fire again on the next day, for it had been rebuilt during the night under the orders of the indefatigable Blas, using earth and remnant ship parts!

At a quarter past seven on the morning of April 2, 1741, the Spanish had a great surprise. The trees in the direction of Tierrabomba disappeared in an instant, and the astonishing scene of twenty twenty-four-pounder cannons and forty mortars was unveiled. Blas, weeks before, had insisted with Eslava that all the trees on the island be cut down, in order to avoid this type of ambush... However, as on so many other occasions, his advice had fallen on deaf ears.

Eslava then convened a council of war on the flagship *Galicia*. During the heated debate among the officers, a cannonball carried away the very table on which they were working, wiping out everything in its path. Eslava was slightly wounded, but Blas de Lezo added a few more decorations to his body already so honoured by enemy fire: he had one

of his hands and a thigh badly injured by shrapnel.

In his diary, in which he makes very little mention of his deeds and is even more laconic about his pain, he only notes: “At nine in the morning I was wounded in a thigh and a hand.”⁸ He refused to be evacuated and continued to debate with Carlos Desnaux on how best to abandon his position in *San Luis*.

Before long the English had conquered the entrance to the bay, reaching the last line of defence of the Spanish. The latter were abandoning and destroying fortresses which, according to Eslava’s opinion, were untenable positions. Blas, not without reason, was indignant, as he wanted to make the enemy pay dearly for every position that they had to abandon.

To add to the altercations between the two commanders, Eslava ordered the sinking of the last two ships that remained, to obstruct the passage of the English, which was of no use at all. However, even though he foresaw these disasters and sometimes let a few barbs slip from his pent-up anger, Blas maintained intact his obedience to the legitimately constituted authority.

Unexpected victory

In the meantime, Vernon was already singing victory. He sent the frigate *Spence*, commanded by Captain Lowes, to England with news of the imminent capture of Cartagena.



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Sebastián de Eslava seemed the antithesis of Blas de Lezo. With the victory won, he began to denigrate the image of the armada’s general to the Spanish king

Portrait of Sebastián de Eslava - Guendulain Palace, Navarra (Spain)

There, “imminent” was interpreted as “indisputable”. The cannons of the Tower of London roared, the belfries sounded and commemorative coins were distributed, on which Blas de Lezo – with two legs... – was depicted kneeling before the British commander. On the back of the coin read the inscription: “The pride of Spain humbled by Admiral Vernon.”

On April 20, 1741, however, a mysterious episode occurred that spelled the end of the English invasion.

Vernon decided to take the Fortress of *San Felipe de Barajas*, despite



Cannons of the San Felipe de Barajas Fortress - Cartagena de Indias (Colombia)

the reluctance of the infantry commander, Wentworth, who judged such an enterprise impossible. In the dead of night, two groups advanced through the dense woods: one aimed to reach the castle from the north; the other, from the south. However, the result was disastrous. The guide of one of the garrisons, a Spanish deserter, led them in circles all night through the forest. When they reached the foot of the fortress it was already daylight and the surprise effect had been lost. Even so, they continued the operation. They placed the ladders in the most strategic positions, but they soon realized that they were not high enough, as Blas de Lezo had ordered a trench to be dug around the wall.

The fact, almost anecdotal, resulted in the loss of the troops, which, terrified under enemy fire, abandoned equipment, arms, men and ladders... The Spanish did not even wait for orders and sprang in pursuit of the infantry with bayonets drawn.



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Vernon was already singing victory and, in England, commemorative coins were struck, depicting Blas de Lezo kneeling before the British commander

Commemorative coins distributed in England - Rotterdam Museum (Netherlands)

After this shameful failure, Vernon had no choice but to gather his officers in council on the *Princess Carolina*, rage against Wentworth's incompetence, blame the English government for not having offered him the reinforcements he wanted, and give the order to retreat.

What had happened? How had victory passed from the attackers to the defenders overnight?

The truth was that the English army was in a truly calamitous state. In the holds of their ships, transformed into "hospitals", without doctors or any form of sanitation, men were crowded together, spreading infections and parasites. Long before Vernon, the exhausted troops had already been convinced that Cartagena would cost much more than originally hoped.

The British withdrew gradually, leaving wreckage in their wake and keeping the enemy under fire so as not to be pursued. The manoeuvre lasted a week and served, in part, not to leave the men idle and demoralized.

Blas confirmed the victory and, with the simplicity of one who does not look at his own merits and can no longer be surprised by anything in this life, he only notes in his diary that the enemies were showing signs of withdrawing.⁹



Reproduction

Long before Vernon, the exhausted troops had already been convinced that Cartagena would cost much more than originally hoped

British ships in Cartagena de Indias, by Isaac Basire - Nacional Library of Colombia, Bogota

The anonymous hero

The enemy sails disappeared over the horizon and at last Cartagena had time to contemplate the price of victory among its still-warm ruins.

The refulgent heroism of Blas de Lezo would be readily recognized by those closest to him. So many services rendered to his homeland, his king and – why not say it? – his religion, could not be completely ignored.

However, the natural echo of his honour was stifled. The first to write about the victory to the Spanish court was the prelate of Cartagena, Bishop Gregorio de Molleda. Contravening his mission as pastor and of defender and proclaimer of the truth, this cleric sullied himself with the culpability of a thinly veiled defamation. In his hasty account of the defence of Cartagena de Indias, all praise was given to the famous figure of the Viceroy Sebastián de Eslava who, despite the scandalous revolts of a certain Blas de Lezo, achieved brilliant success...

Eslava himself then painted his own version of the story, in which Blas took on the appearance of a criminal: “May he be punished for his conduct,”¹⁰ he wrote to the king.

While a flood of accusations reached the Spanish Crown and the majority of Public Opinion applauded Sebastián de Eslava, in a glorious ascension of praise and honours, what was the commander of the navy, *Don Blas de Lezo y Olavarrieta* doing?



When physical appearances show only a man reduced to half his natural capacities, behind the exterior there may be a giant, a hero, a conqueror

Blas de Lezo, by Salvador Amaya,
Plaza de Colón, Madrid

Sick, forgotten and suffering the effects of the war, he lived out his final days on a bed from which he would no longer rise. He dedicated his last ounces of strength to writing his version of the facts¹¹ and thus safeguarding the honour of forty years of service at the spearhead of dedication and heroism and obtaining a dignified rest for the family he was leaving behind.

Blas faced his last battle, his agony, at eight in the morning of September 7, 1741. His body, mutilated by enemy fire, was buried; his reputation continued to be persecuted by slander, and his honour, intact, remained buried with him somewhere in the vicinity of Cartagena de Indias. Not even the place of his tomb is known.

Nevertheless, more recently, no small number of historians have taken up the cause of doing justice to the glory of the *Mediohombre*. His compatriots of today, taking exception to the silence of his contemporaries, recognize this outstanding figure and acclaim him as one of the greatest heroes of the Spanish conquest.

His last adventure can teach us many things. History is obstinate, and tends to repeat itself. Like new Goliaths, great powers rise up, think they are invincible, and proclaim themselves omnipotent. They laugh at the Lord's anointed ones, but are defeated by them in an unexpected and fulminating blow.

They fill their pockets with their own coins, minted by those who sing victory too soon...

For even when physical appearances show only a man reduced to half his natural capacities, behind the exterior there may be a giant, a hero, a conqueror, in whom virtues and love of an ideal have grown to the point that they could no longer be contained by a whole man. ✧

¹ SARAVIA, Gonzalo M. Quintero. *Don Blas de Lezo. Biografía de un marino español del siglo XVIII*. 3.ed. Madrid: EDAF, 2016, p.46.

² Cf. Idem, p.27.

³ Idem, p.160.

⁴ Cf. VICTORIA, Pablo. *El día que España derrotó a Inglaterra*. 3.ed. Barcelona: Áltera, 2008, p.41.

⁵ SARAVIA, op. cit., p.160.

⁶ Idem, p.204.

⁷ Idem, p.204.

⁸ Idem, p.222.

⁹ Cf. Idem, p.248.

¹⁰ Idem, p.257.

¹¹ Cf. CRESPO-FRANCÉS, José Antonio. *Blas de Lezo y la defensa heroica de Cartagena de Indias*. 4. Ed. Madrid: Editorial, ACTAS, 2016, p. 191.



“Zelo zelatus sum”

As Dr. Plinio delved deeper into the various aspects of the Carmelite history and charism, he perceived the wisdom of the supernatural inspiration which had led him to make the promise of joining the Order.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

“**A**ll my life I have felt an extraordinary affinity with the Order of Carmel and have had the desire to belong to it, based largely on its prophetic aspects, because it is the prophetic Order par excellence,” affirmed Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira.

From the enchantment born in the initial steps of his Catholic militancy, during a procession of Carmelite tertiaries, and from the promise which arose from this of one day joining the Order of Carmel, various factors concurred to increase this yearning: “I began to read the great Carmelite Saints: St. Teresa of Avila, St. Theresse of the Child Jesus, something of St. John of the Cross and others, and this greatly impressed me. Even more so when I read that the prophet Elijah was the founder of the Order of Carmel and, with the vision of the little cloud, he was the first to have the revelation about the Virgin who was to come. All this gave me a great desire to become a Carmelite.”

Like all the relevant episodes of his life, this one was prepared by various providential circumstances. Among

them is the fact that he began to work as a lawyer for the Carmelite Province of Rio de Janeiro, thus initiating a relationship that would go far beyond the mere professional, for Dr. Plinio soon developed a strong friendship with the Father Provincial and other Carmelite friars. They were all Dutch

“All my life I have felt an extraordinary affinity with the Order of Carmel, it being the prophetic Order par excellence”

and, when they came to visit him in his office, the preferred topic of conversation was, consequently, their native country.

One day, however, Dr. Plinio asked them about the possibility of being admitted to the Order of Carmel.

Tertiary of the Venerable Order of Carmel

At that time, the Carmelites had not yet founded the Third Order in the convent located on Martiniano de Carvalho Street in São Paulo. But, as soon as that took place, Dr. Plinio asked for admission, together with a group of his disciples, taking the name Brother Isaiah of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

He explained that he chose this invocation of the Blessed Virgin so that, in the midst of the struggles in which he found himself, “She would perpetually protect me” and “help me to fulfil my duty,” in his words.

Having constituted a sufficient number sharing the same aspirations, on February 2, 1954, with the consent of the Father General of the Carmelites, Fr. Kiliano Lynch, Dr. Plinio’s sons formed a sodality, called Virgo Flos Carmeli, of which he would be elected first prior. Thenceforth, all the new disciples recruited to join the ranks of the Group¹ over the years would enter this sodality.

As Dr. Plinio delved more deeply into the various aspects of the Car-

melite history and charism, and noted their intimate connection with his mission, he perceived the wisdom of the supernatural inspiration which had led him to make the promise of joining the Order two decades earlier.

By virtue of the supernatural union established with the Holy Church since his earliest childhood, Dr. Plinio fully appreciated the immense spiritual fruit for his work that would result from the effective juridical bonding of its members with a family of souls so privileged by the Blessed Virgin Mary:

“Our belonging to the Third Order of Carmel is a complement and natural integral element, adequate from every point of view and with profound reasons, of our belonging to the Group. Both things form a whole and a union. In this sense, we must have the highest regard not only for our duties as Carmelites, but also for the great benefits we enjoy as such. The fact that this establishes a juridical bond between Our Lady and us, which She has mercifully willed to set up, entitles us to be her sons and slaves for a very special reason, and therefore to ask Her for whatever we desire, with particular confidence.”

Burning zeal for the Lord God of hosts

In the very first ceremonies in which he participated as a member of the Third Order, Dr. Plinio saw the brilliance of the personality of St. Elijah shine before him, a fact that shows his soul’s profound harmony with the purest and most authentic core of the Carmelite ideal.

Before Sunday Mass, the tertiaries formed a procession which filed down the side aisles of the Basilica of Carmel before finally taking their place in the front pews, and from there they participated in the Holy Sacrifice. As the procession advanced, Dr. Plinio’s gaze fell on a mural painting depicting the episode in which St. Elijah, having



Dr. Plinio clothed in the habit of the Third Order of Carmel, in the 1950s; previous page, Prophet Elijah - Basilica of Our Lady of Carmel, São Paulo

spent the night in a cave, is visited by God who asks him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kgs 19:9). There,

“If a man were to become zealous for the Lord God of hosts, he would fulfil the demands of God’s love”

on the mural, the prophet’s reply was written in Latin: “*Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino, Deo exercituum*” (1 Kgs 19:10).

When he read that sentence which, although he did not yet know it, constitutes the motto of the Order of Car-

mel, he felt a tremendous impact, as he recounted: “A burning and extraordinary zeal! I had an experience that completely filled me with enthusiasm and gladness, but also with the assurance that those words of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament were a eulogy of how one should be, and that if a man were to become zealous, but with a fiery zeal, for Him who is the Lord God of hosts, he would be extraordinary and would fulfil the demands of God’s love”; “That is precisely what I would like to be able to say of myself. *Zelo zelatus sum*, but for God, above all, as God of hosts. That is to say, God in the combat, God in militancy, God in the fight.”

Admiring the Eliatic line

Dr. Plinio’s admiration of the Eliatic vocation did not stop there. The Tishbite was the only prophet left in his time, for the others had been killed by Ahab and Jezebel or had sold themselves to the sect of Baal. However, God had not abandoned the chosen people, for Elijah embodied the faithfulness of all Israel. And for all the centuries to come, he will represent, within the Church, the zeal for integrity and truth. All the just eulogies that Scripture pays him are weighed, counted and measured, but one of them especially calls our attention in this context: “Blessed are they that saw thee, and were honoured with thy friendship” (Ecclus 48:11). [DR]

Among these chosen ones is Elisha who, when the prophet was carried away by a fiery chariot, received a double share of his spirit (cf. 2 Kgs 2:9-11; Ecclus 48:13). Does this not mean that there is a spirit of Elijah that is transmitted?

This is what is observed when, later on, graces of the same mould would shape the mentality and mission of St. John the Baptist (cf. Mt 11:14; Lk 1:17) and of so many other Saints: “Elijah appears as the first to devote himself to Our Lady and as the one who will



Karl Gruber (CC by-sa 4.0)

St. Elijah is carried away in a chariot of fire before Elisha - Carmel of Mayerling, Lower Austria (Austria)

intervene in her decisive battles in the struggle against the Antichrist. He is her great devotee. He, the bearer of a grace, of a spirit, is at the head of a series of luminaries of Marian devotion. He is the initiator of a Marian grace, which is a foreshadowing of the grace of the advent of the Word. [...] Then, proceeding to others, we see that the growth of Mariology and devotion to Our Lady in the Church reaches its highest expression in St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort.”

This led Dr. Plinio to raise the hypothesis that St. Elijah opened a current of prophets throughout history, closely linked to the Carmelite spiritual family, which he called the Eliatic line. Its origin and support are found in the mentality, spirit, way of being, patience, humility and zeal for God’s cause shown by the “father and guide of Carmel” himself.

Therefore, when speaking of him, Dr. Plinio did so from the depths of his soul, admiring him as the founder of this school of spiritual life: “Within a nebulous area that offers us few but

Within the fabric of history, it was necessary for God to create a continuity among those who would maintain orthodoxy over the course of time

very important historical facts, everything is suggestive of a great concatenation, of a great line of souls that are connected to one another. [...] We perceive that this forms an immense vein which, seen as a whole, ultimately presents itself as a unity of men who touched each other with at least the tip of their finger.”

Within the fabric of history, it was necessary for God to create continuity among those who would maintain the orthodoxy and observance of the

Law throughout time, not by their own efforts, but thanks to a fidelity infused by Him. In this sense, would not Dr. Plinio’s entry into the Third Order of Carmel have been permitted by Providence as a way of fostering his mystical relationship and that of his work with the prophet par excellence and his full identification with the Eliatic spirit? ✧

Taken, with adaptations, from:
O dom de sabedoria na mente, vida e obra de [The Gift of Wisdom in the Thought, Life and Work of] Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira.

São Paulo: LEV, 2016, v.III, p.304-317

¹ When, at the beginning of the 1930s, Dr. Plinio formed an incipient group of disciples, the expression *Plinio’s Group* arose in Catholic circles. The expression took such hold internally that, decades later, the word *Group* continued to be used to designate the ensemble of his work.

² From the Latin: “With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts.” [DR]



A Country that is Great through Faith

Brazil's mission consists in lovingly illuminating the world with the "lumen Christi" that the Church radiates. Blessed is this sober and detached people, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven!

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira



It would not be too daring, perhaps, to affirm that God placed the peoples of His choice within panoramas that are appropriate for the accomplishment of the great destinies to which He calls them. And there is no one who, travelling through our Brazil, does not experience the vague impression that God has destined this country as the setting for great feats. Its dramatic mountains and mysterious cliffs seem to invite man to the supreme audacities of Christian heroism, its verdant plains seem intent on inspiring the emergence of new artistic and literary schools, new forms and types of beauty, and on its coastline the seas seem to sing the future glory of one of the largest peoples on earth. [...]

And today, as Brazil emerges from its adolescence into full maturity, and the sceptre of Christian culture, which totalitarianism would like to destroy, totters in the hands of Old Europe, it becomes clear to all that the Catholic countries of America are in reality the great granary of the Church and of civilization, the fertile ground in which the vegetation being destroyed by barbarism in the Old World can flourish with greater brilliance than ever before. The whole of America is

a constellation of fraternal peoples. In this constellation, it would be pointless to say that the physical dimensions of Brazil are not an image of the magnitude of its providential role. [...]

The providential mission of Brazil consists in growing within its own borders, in unfolding the splendours of a genuinely Roman Catholic and Apostolic civilization here, and in lovingly illuminating the entire world with the torch of this great light, which will truly be the *lumen Christi* that the Church radiates. Our kind and hospitable nature, the plurality of races that live here in brotherly harmony, the providential contribution of the immigrants who so intimately integrated themselves into the life of the nation, and above all the norms of the Holy Gospel, will never make of our longing for greatness a pretext for narrow-minded Jacobinism, for senseless racism, or for criminal imperialism. [...]

Brazil will not be great through conquest, but through faith; it will not be rich through money as much as through generosity. [...]

Blessed is this sober and detached people, despite the splendour of their wealth, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed is this generous and welcoming people, who love peace more than riches, for they possess the earth.

Blessed is this people with a heart that is sensitive to the love and sorrows of the God-Man, to the sorrows and love of their neighbour, for they will thus be consoled.

Blessed is this virile and strong people, intrepid and courageous, hungry and thirsty for heroic and complete virtues, for their appetite for holiness and supernatural grandeur will be satisfied.

Blessed is this merciful people, for they will obtain mercy.

Blessed is this people who are chaste and clean of heart, blessed is the inviolable purity of their Christian families, for they will see God.

Blessed is this peaceful people, of idealism free from Jacobinism and racism, because they will be called children of God.

Blessed is this people who take their love for the Church to the point of fighting and suffering for her, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. ✧

Taken from: Greeting to civil and military authorities.

In: *Legionário*. São Paulo. Year XVI. N.525 (Sept. 7, 1942); p.2

A Soul Transformed by Love



Daniela Silva

What did she see in Jesus' gaze? Reprehension?
Yes, but also an immense compassion.
And soon her life of sin became unbearable.



Victor Andrei Prado

Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.”¹

When speaking of the two loves, St. Augustine did so with full knowledge of the facts, for he had experienced within himself the dynamism of both. In his youth, he had seen how the selfish soul seeks nothing but to glorify itself, clinging to corporeal goods and going to the extreme of despising God. After his conversion, however, his only goal was to worship God, to honour Him and to rely solely on Him.

But centuries earlier, history had already contemplated another soul who experienced the struggle of these two loves, perhaps even more powerfully than the Bishop of Hippo: Mary Magdalene, disciple of Jesus.

In the absence of historical documents providing us with details of her life, we will build some considerations on the visions of the German

mystic Anne Catherine Emmerich,² beatified by St. John Paul II in October 2004.

In her childhood, praise and pampering

According to the revelations received by this Blessed, Mary belonged to a wealthy family who owned many properties in Judea. One of them was next to the Temple in Jerusalem, the principal place of pilgrimage for the Jewish people and, as a result, a site by which a large number of people constantly passed.

Little Mary was very beautiful, and her mother spoiled her and took delight in showing her off, setting her in a window, seated on cushions and dressed up in fine clothes, so that she could be seen and praised by the passers-by. This encouraged the worm of vanity to develop in the girl's soul, leading her to indulge in pride and self-contemplation from an early age...

Another factor influenced the course of her life in a decisive way: the

death of her parents when she was still very young. After the inheritance was divided among her siblings – Lazarus, Martha and another sister, whose name is not mentioned in the Gospel – Mary received a castle in the village of Magdala, in Galilee. She went to live there, accompanied by her attendants and servants, when she was but eleven years old.

Without a higher ideal to guide her decisions and little inclined to follow the advice of those who tried to direct her towards the good, Mary ended up sinking into the worst vices, always seeking to satisfy the follies of her self-love.

The encounter with the Master

While Magdalene spent her time and fortune in futile amusements, her siblings Lazarus and Martha drew closer and closer to Jesus. As both owned a large castle in Bethany, near Jerusalem, they offered hospitality to the Master on His way to His baptism by John the Baptist. It was on this occasion that Martha first spoke to Jesus

about Mary and expressed her concern. Our Lord encouraged her to persevere in her prayers for her sister, strengthening her in the hope that Mary would eventually mend her ways.

After some time, Martha succeeded in persuading Mary to go to meet Jesus, who was then in Jezreel, in Galilee. However, since the Divine Redeemer's stay there lasted only a few hours, the sisters were unable to see Him.

Shortly afterwards, again urged by Martha, the young woman agreed to accompany her to a place where Jesus had stopped with His disciples to preach to the people and work miracles. At a certain moment, when Mary was in the guesthouse, she went to a window to observe the activity below and caught sight of the Master walking by with His disciples. "He looked at her gravely as He passed, with a glance that pierced her soul."³

A contemporary author rightly comments: "What was in those eyes? Reprehension? Yes, reprehension; but also compassion, immense compassion. Her life became unbearable for her." From that moment on, "each sin engraved that gaze more deeply in her memory."⁴

Some time passed until, faced with her sister's insistence, Mary eventually gave in again and went to the place where Our Lord was to preach. "She was inwardly confused and a prey to interior struggle."⁵ It was grace that was calling her! "When Jesus appeared and began to speak, her eyes and her soul were riveted on Him alone."⁶

Hearing Our Lord's words and witnessing the healings He performed softened that hard heart, which from then on, without knowing exactly why, sought to draw near to the Master.

"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven"

The opportune moment arose when a Pharisee invited Jesus to a banquet in his house (cf. Lk 7:36-50). As the seer recounts, Mary noticed that the Redeemer had not received, either before or during the meal, any gesture of honour or the respectful attention commonly shown to guests.⁷ This led her to take the initiative related by the Evangelist. She "brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." (Lk 7:37-38).

Mary wanted to express her repentance and beg forgiveness, but she could not manage to say a word; they were drowned out by tears. She could only kiss the feet of her Saviour as she wept, not sure whether from love or sorrow.

With her head bowed, she heard Our Lord ask the Pharisee: "A certain

creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" (Lk 7:41-42).

How those words must have echoed in Magdalene's soul!

And then she dared to raise her eyes... meeting with that gaze that had once reproached her, now transformed into an ocean of gentleness and goodness. Turning towards her, Jesus said to the Pharisee: "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave Me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. [...] Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much" (Lk 7:44-45, 47).

Oh, wonder! As Mary washed the Saviour's feet, her soul was purified; as she anointed them with balsam, the pleasing odour of divine forgiveness inundated her entirely. And the Lord confirmed all that she felt



Francisco Lecaros

Mary wanted to express her repentance and beg forgiveness, but her words were drowned out by tears, and she could only kiss her Saviour's feet

Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee - Church of St. Quintinus, Tornai (Belgium); previous page, St. Mary Magdalene - Mount Carmel House, Caieiras (SP)

in her soul, saying to her: “Your sins are forgiven. [...] Your faith has saved you; go in peace” (Lk 7:48, 50).

The first to announce the Resurrection

From then on, Magdalene “followed Jesus everywhere, sat at His feet, stood and waited for Him everywhere. She thought of Him alone, saw Him alone, knew only her Redeemer and her own sins.”⁸

She accompanied Him until the supreme hour of His Passion and Death: “standing by the Cross of Jesus were His Mother, and His Mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary

Magdalene” (Jn 19:25). And after the “*consummatum est*” she remained beside the Master’s lifeless Body until assisting Our Lady, with all care and delicacy, in embalming and burying Him, and finally leaving the sepulchre only because of the dangers of the night.

Nevertheless, burning with love for the Lord, so uncontainable was her desire to be near His Sacred Body that she resolved to anoint it once more.⁹ Accordingly, on the day after the Sabbath, before dawn (cf. Jn 20:1), Mary Magdalene went to the tomb, and was stunned by the discovery that the Body had been

“stolen”... It was the consummation of the separation, which brought with it the quintessence of sorrow.

Fr. Antonio Vieira, with his characteristic eloquence, makes the following comment: “The sorrow of seeing Him stolen, or not seeing Him because He was stolen, was the sorrow of absence: *Et hic dolor maior erat*. Take note: Christ was as dead, stolen, as He was deceased; but deceased was less absent than stolen; because death was a semi-absence, it took His Soul, and left Him the Body; theft was total absence; it took His Body after the Soul had been taken. And as theft was the greatest absence of the beloved, so it was the greatest sorrow of the lover.”¹⁰

Such was her urgency to find the Body that, even when questioned by Angels, she does not stop to wonder that they are heavenly spirits speaking to her; the only thing she wants to know is where the Beloved is: “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him” (Jn 20:13).

Mary fears nothing and is ready to overcome any difficulty. And she shows this when, without recognizing the Master in the One who asks her “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?”, she answers: “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away” (Jn 20:15).

But when He calls her by name – “Mary” (Jn 20:16), a series of impressions, graces and delights flooded her memory. What nostalgia would she not have felt of hearing that “Mary”?

Such was her intimacy with Our Lord that her first impulse was to throw herself at His feet to embrace



“Noli me tangere”, by Fra Angelico - Monastery of San Marco, Florence (Italy)

Him. Jesus does not need to show her His hands and side, as He will do later with the disciples, in order to prove to them that He was not a ghost (cf. Lk 24:37). “Mary does not even question that He had died and risen: it was He, the Master.”¹¹

Seeing her robust faith and not wishing to deprive her of merit,¹² the Redeemer does not allow her to touch Him, but sends her as the first herald of the Resurrection: “go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (Jn 20:17).

“Arise, my beloved, and come!”

After the Resurrection, the Evangelists no longer mention Mary Magdalene. However, “a prevalent tradition leads her out into the desert and even brings her with the Jewish diaspora to the shores of Marseilles.”¹³ It is said that during the persecutions that took place in the years following the Lord’s Ascension, Mary Magdalene, together with her siblings Martha and Lazarus, were put into a boat and left adrift on the high



Francisco Lecaros

Scenes from the life of St. Mary Magdalene - Notre-Dame Cathedral in Coutances (France)

seas, to be shipwrecked and buried beneath the waves. However, God ordained that they should land in France.¹⁴

Once in Marseilles, St. Mary Magdalene ardently preached the name of Jesus. After converting many to the Christian religion, nothing else attracted her in this world. Far from her Beloved, any corner of the earth was an exile for her. How could she assuage her longing and shorten the

great distance that separated her from Heaven?

It was in the desert that Mary found the way. Having taken refuge there, she made her abode in a place prepared by Angels! And there she remained incognito for thirty years.¹⁵

At the end of that long period of heavenly communion and penance for the sins of her past life, there was nothing further to prevent Mary Magdalene from fulfilling her long-held desire: to throw herself once more at Jesus’ feet, to embrace them and kiss them with all her love. At the Resurrection, Our Lord had prevented her, claiming that He had not yet ascended to the Father (cf. Jn 20:17).

Now, however, the situation was different: Jesus was already with the Father; she must go to meet Him.

It is said that angelic spirits led her to Bishop St. Maximinus, who administered Holy Communion to her. Then, lying down before the altar, Mary Magdalene delivered her soul to God and was able to be with her Beloved forever.¹⁶ ✦

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE. *De Civitate Dei*. L.XIV, c.28.

² Cf. BLESSED ANNE CATHERINE EMMERICH. *Maria Magdalena*. 2.ed. São Paulo: MIR, 2015.

³ Idem, p.17.

⁴ LUCA DE TENA Y DE BRUNET, María Luisa. *Santa María Magdalena*. In: ECH-EVERRÍA, Lamberto de; LLORCA, SJ, Bernardino;

REPETTO BETES, José Luis (Org.). *Año Cristiano*. Madrid: BAC, 2005, v.VII, p.589.

⁵ BLESSED ANNE CATHERINE EMMERICH, op. cit., p.31-32.

⁶ Idem, p.32.

⁷ Cf. Idem, p.37.

⁸ Idem, p.60.

⁹ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano:

LEV; Nobleton: Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, v.I, p.270.

¹⁰ VIEIRA, Antônio. *Obra Completa. Parenética*. Volume II. São Paulo: Loyola, 2015, v.IV, p.313.

¹¹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Homily for the Memorial of St. Mary Magdalene*. Mairiporã, July 22, 2005.

¹² Cf. CLÁ DIAS, João Scognamiglio. *New Insights on the*

Gospels. Città del Vaticano: LEV; Nobleton: Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, v.VII, p.365.

¹³ LUCA DE TENA Y DE BRUNET, op. cit., p.597.

¹⁴ Cf. DE VARAZZE, Jacopo. *Legenda áurea: vidas de Santos*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003, p.545.

¹⁵ Cf. Idem, p.549.

¹⁶ Cf. Idem, p.550-551.

Counsels from the Greatest Giants on Earth

The sequoia, the most ancient of trees on earth, conveys to us precious lessons today, which, if put into practice, will be of great benefit for our spiritual life.



Sr. Mariana de Oliveira, EP

The Psalmist sings that “the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork” (Ps 19:1). This means that, through its wonders, the order of creation reflects sublime truths and contains valuable teachings. They are authentic “messages” that the Divine Artist, desiring to enter into contact with us, has left in every creature, such as the dawn or the sunset, the singing of the birds or the waves of the sea... God thus employs the elements that make up the symphony of nature as a means to lead us to Him.

With these considerations in mind, let us turn our attention to the plant kingdom. This time, the one who will teach us precious lessons will be the largest and most ancient trees on earth: the sequoias.

Giants of nature!

Native to California, the sequoia belongs to the order of conifers. At present there are only two species: *Sequoia sempervirens*, commonly known as the redwood, which can grow to over 100 metres in height and live for around a thousand years, and *Se-*

quoiadendron giganteum, known as the giant sequoia, whose longevity can extend to up to three millennia and of which a specimen was recently found with an impressive height of 105 metres.¹

In addition to its vertiginous vertical dimension, the mighty trunk of a sequoia tree can attain a diameter of 12 metres. Sequoia National Park, located in California’s Sierra Nevada, boasts such a sturdy specimen that it takes twenty men with arms fully extended to encircle it... This makes it one of the largest and oldest plants on the entire planet!

It takes hundreds or even thousands of years for these trees to reach maturity; however – except for human intervention for the extraction of wood – they usually face little danger of being impeded in this process, as their leaves serve for neither food nor medicine, and their bark, which is about thirty centimetres thick, offers special resistance to fire, fungi and insects.²

Only one factor can be lethal for the sequoia: being separated from its “brothers”! Curiously, the terrain on which God planted it is too rocky to

Sentinel, a giant sequoia in Giant Forest
Grove - Sequoia National Park (CA)

allow it to set deep roots... For this reason, the giants of the plant kingdom do not find their stability in the depths of the earth, like other trees, but in “collateral support”: they always grow close to each other and intertwine their roots, forming a sort of network under the shallow soil. Thus united, linked and even interwoven, they are ready to confront the strongest winds.

Another interesting aspect of this tree is that when it reaches “old age”, the best method of prolonging its life is called fire. Forest fires, common in its native region, open huge cracks in its trunk. However, healing these wounds takes a long time and requires it to redouble its vigour... Seeing itself wounded, it feels a heightened need to “fight” for survival, which imparts vitality for hundreds of years, at the end of which it finds itself rejuvenated and robust.

For the sequoia, the arrival of a fire means another two or three hundred years of life!

Without doubt, if one of these giants, during the arduous years of struggle for its recovery, could speak to us, it would say: “I am wounded, but I am fighting! And, precisely because of this, I am alive!”

Two valuable lessons for life

Today, the monumental sequoias teach us precious lessons that can help to spiritually make us even more robust and more durable than they are.

The first lesson consists in understanding that we will never attain the

fullness of our Christian vocation alone! We may be able to take a few steps without the help of our brothers and sisters in the Faith... But will we be able to walk with perseverance and precision towards perfection when darkness falls and we are beset by trials? Will we manage to stand firm in the face of the whirlwinds of the world’s temptations and illusions?

We know from experience that every individualist is doomed to supernatural sterility... Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, God made Man, wished to depend on a Mother to sustain Him until the supreme moment of the *consummatum est*, and while He is omnipotent, He did not found His Church alone, but chose twelve Apostles. How much more do we, poor mortals, need one another to reach sanctity!

We need to be helped along this path and, when strengthened, to also reinforce others. Was this not the advice given by Jesus to St. Peter: “and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren” (Lk 22:32)?

The second lesson that the sequoia teaches us is that suffering can renew and purify us. Like the California wildfires, sorrow sooner or later presents itself in our lives; there is no escape. “*Militia est vitam hominis super terram*” (Jb 7:1), as Job affirmed. However, if the fire of tribulations opens fissures, it also forces us to fight and, as a consequence, makes us stronger, purer and holier, provided we know how

to transcend difficulties with the eyes of faith.

When we perceive the wounds left by trials, let us not waste time in faint-hearted lamentations. Let us fight with confidence in God! In this way, our injuries will earn for us not just two hundred years of life, but the eternal joys of the beatific vision.

Always united, let us fight with enthusiasm!

In the face of adversity let us therefore arm ourselves with a new disposition of soul! Let us help one another in the battles we face; let us strengthen one another in faith, and let us love one another. Then the onslaughts of the infernal enemy will never be able to tear up our roots from the heart of Holy Mother Church.

Let us face the difficulties of life with joy and fortitude, always mindful that it is out of love that our heavenly Father sends us tribulations, so as to make us warriors of Christ and worthy of the eternal reward. The scourges that God sends us are not for our perdition, but for our amendment (cf. Jt 8:27).

Thus strengthened and encouraged, sustained by the help of the Blessed Virgin, we shall gloriously attain our full moral stature! ✧

¹ Cf. ILLUSTRATED DICTIONARY ENCYCLOPEDIA. São Paulo: April, 2006, v.XXI, p.2387.

² Cf. NEW BARSÁ ENCYCLOPEDIA. 6.ed. São Paulo: Barsa Planeta Internacional, 2002, v.XIII, p.218.

Giant sequoia grove -
Case Mountain (CT)

Help of the Weak and Hope of the Sick

Dona Lucilia has helped countless souls, filling them with hope in sickness and tragedy, and giving them strength to face difficult and painful situations.



Elizabete Fátima Astorino

“**F**or some things, science has an explanation; for others, only God has the answer.” With these words, Patricia de Fátima Silva, from Rio de Janeiro State (Brazil), closes the account of how her young son underwent sixty-seven hospitalizations and seven hundred and fifty days of hospital treatment without shedding a single tear, during which he was submitted to one hundred and ten chemotherapy sessions and eighty blood tests.

Not only without tears, but with joy and serenity. Amazed, Patricia draws her own conclusion: “The only explanation is that Our Lady and Dona Lucilia protected him, as a good mother protects her child.”

Diagnosis of an incurable disease

In gratitude for the constant help received throughout the family's ordeal, this mother sends us an account of her sorrows, prayers and joys, in the hope that many other afflicted people may benefit from Dona Lucilia's maternal assistance.

She writes: “In March 2013, when he was only two years and eight months old, Pedro Artur was diagnosed with

neurofibromatosis, an incurable disease for which there was not even a specific treatment, and a tumour on the optic nerve. Faced with this condition, the doctors said there was nothing they could do to cure the child. Therefore, they would only monitor the disease to follow its evolution.”

Hoping to find a solution elsewhere, Patricia and her husband took their son to several other doctors, but they always received the same answer: “There is nothing that can be done.” So, once they realized the

inability of human resources to do anything, they decided to appeal to supernatural means.

“We never gave up... In March 2013, right after the first diagnosis, we turned to Dona Lucilia for help. On April 22, the anniversary of her birth, my husband took our son to the place where her mortal remains lie, in Consolation Cemetery in São Pa-

*Having realized
that human aid
was of no avail, the
family confidently
turned to
Dona Lucilia
for help*

Pedro Artur with a portrait of
Dona Lucilia



Reproduction

ulo. There he prayed, asking for the grace of a miraculous cure.”

Faith once again countered by medical opinion

“In 2014” – the account continues – “Pedro Artur was admitted to the National Cancer Institute (INCA) in Rio de Janeiro, where he was monitored for four years, without receiving any treatment. An MRI scan done at the end of 2017 revealed that the eye tumour had grown and another one had appeared in the brain, deeply set in a delicate region.”

In view of this worsening of the situation, Patricia took her son to be evaluated by a specialist, who, after reviewing all the reports and exams, simply said the following:

“Ma’am, I recommend that Pedro Artur continue to be monitored at the INCA. There is nothing I can do for him.”

“Can’t you at least recommend some kind of treatment?”

“Unfortunately, no. Chemotherapy will harm him and won’t solve the problem. Radiotherapy might leave him blind in both eyes. And surgery is very risky: it could lead to loss of sight, and the tumour could return even more aggressively.”

Once again, the faith of this Catholic couple was countered by medical protocol, but they did not give up; above all, they never lost confidence in Dona Lucilia’s help. They kept on praying.

“In March 2018, Pedro Artur began chemotherapy treatment at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Itaperuna. Presently, he has made it through not one but one hundred and ten sessions! Since March 2013, we have been turning to the help of Dona Lucilia, in order to obtain from God the miraculous healing of our great little warrior! How many graces have already been obtained! Faith is to believe in what we do not see;



Pedro Artur in his hospital bed

“The impossible happened: Pedro Artur is doing well, there is no more brain tumour and the eye tumour diminished significantly”

and the reward is to see what we believe! And today, what was impossible has happened: Pedro Artur is doing well, the brain tumour has disappeared and the tumour in his eye has diminished significantly.”

Confidence, joy and serenity in tragedy

Impressed by the constant protection of this generous lady, Patricia expresses her gratitude not only for the cure, but above all for the grace of her son’s being able to face everything with serenity: “It was with great joy and confidence that Pedro Artur was admitted every week to undergo the chemotherapy sessions. He spent the days beforehand getting ready for his admission; he did this with such joy and pleasure that it did not seem as if he were going to a hospital. During the long period of treatment, he never manifested any suffering, he

always had a beautiful smile on his face.”

And this exemplary mother concludes: “Many ask if God is not being unjust with us, allowing such a trial for a child. No! God is not unjust; if He were, He would not be God! He is mercy, and His love for us is infinite. It is up to us to remain persevering and confident, without ever losing faith! I am sure that this testimony will touch hearts and transform souls!

Dona Lucilia, help us!”

“I addressed my simple and sincere petitions to Dona Lucilia”

Daniela Martucci – a resident of Sant’Andrea del Garigliano, Italy – learned of the countless benefits obtained through Dona Lucilia, as reported in *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine. She also did some research on the Internet, “to learn a little more about the life of this lovely lady.” She then began to invoke her, certain that her prayers would be heard. And she gives her testimony:

“I did not find a single article that did not express sweet and heart-warming words about the life and actions of Dona Lucilia, and this encouraged me to invoke her in the most difficult moments of my life!

“Last year, my beloved father passed away; a splendid, wonderful man, a pillar in my life. Before his departure, I would start to imagine how difficult my life would be without him, but when the thought came to me that one day he would leave us, I immediately tried to think of something else, so painful was it for me to imagine that, one day...

“When I turned my thoughts to other matters, I addressed my simple and sincere petitions to Dona Lucilia, the venerable lady with her lilac shawl, and she seemed to give me new courage with her smile, to such an extent that I decided to use her photo on the home screen of my mobile phone, so

as to be able to see her at any time.

“I see her wrapped in her shawl, smiling and encouraging me”

Thus, with her characteristic knack, Dona Lucilia knew how to prepare her newest devotee to accept the sufferings that God would ask of her:

“Unfortunately that day came. Papa passed away, leaving a void in me, my mother, my brothers and my children that cannot be filled; and when I tried selfishly to divert my thoughts so as to suffer less, I saw Dona Lucilia’s face... She instilled courage and confidence in me. And if today I have decided to write to you it is because it seems important to me to believe that the Lord grants us the grace of finding out about persons who in some way can give us courage in moments of deep sorrow and difficulty.”

Daniela soon became accustomed to have constant recourse to Dona Lucilia’s efficacious help: “I always think of her as a mediatrix. Without doubt, her immaculate life would have assured her a special place in Heaven, where she can dialogue with Our Lady and present our supplications to Her. Now that she is part of my life I can testify that she hears me when I invoke her. I think of Papa, who is no longer alive, and immediately I see her wrapped in her shawl, smiling and encouraging me.”

“I asked Dona Lucilia for a sign”

“One day when I was thinking intensely about my son Angelo, who was experiencing a time of psychological instability, I turned my eyes heavenward and asked Dona Lucilia for a sign so that I would know she was listening to me and understood my concerns about him. At that precise moment I saw a shooting star



Daniela Martucci at her husband’s side

“We are emerging from a nightmare thanks to Dona Lucilia’s protection! I trust in her intercession and in the warmth of her lilac shawl!”

piercing the blue of the night sky with its luminous trail, and I thought: ‘It was she who heard me and gave me the requested sign.’

“The next afternoon, my son told me that on his way home from work the night before: ‘Mom, something beautiful happened to me. While I was in the car, a shooting star streaked across the sky leaving a trail after it, and it seemed to me that I could almost touch it! It was a wonderful feeling!’ After many days of sadness, I witnessed a luminous smile on my son’s face...”

“We are emerging from a nightmare, thanks to her protection!”

Certain that Dona Lucilia is ready to assist her at all times, Daniela was

not afraid to also implore her help so that her son would not be affected by the pandemic:

“A few days ago my son, who was in contact with a colleague infected with the COVID-19 virus, began to feel aching in his bones, accompanied by fever and olfactory impairment. I earnestly implored Dona Lucilia that she convey my concerns to Our Lady... Angelo took the test and, to everyone’s surprise,

the result was negative!”

Nevertheless, when her husband did contract the illness, Daniela once again did not hesitate to invoke her intercessor.

“For more than ten days he was very ill, with a very high fever and low oxygen levels; we were on the verge of deciding to hospitalize him... My appeal to Dona Lucilia did not go unheeded. My husband began to improve, and the third test was negative. During all this time, I had to assist him, even giving him injections.

“Therefore, it was inevitable that I would also be infected. I turned to her, asking her for the courage to face the difficult situation. I didn’t fall ill, and I was able to take good care of my husband. We are emerging from this nightmare thanks to her protection; of this I am sure! I trust in her intercession and in the warmth of her lilac shawl!”

* * *

Thus, this kind lady does not cease to win over new devotees who, feeling protected under her welcoming shawl, do not doubt in her maternal help. Yes, she has sustained countless souls, filling them with hope and giving them strength to face difficult and painful situations. ✧

Reflections of Devotion to Our Lady



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Dona Lucilia's piety, which she almost never spoke of, was hardly ostentatious, but could be noticed by all. It was consistent with her way of being; communicative and affable, but very discreet. Just like her tone of voice – sweet and mild, like the different registers of an organ played softly and harmoniously in a small chapel, her ardent devotion always remained shrouded in a veil of discretion.

Such was her devotion to the Mother of God, which could almost be said to have begun as the purifying waters of Baptism were poured over her head.

One of the practices that most spurred her growth in this devotion was evidently the recitation of the Holy Rosary, which had been a custom of hers since her youth. For a long time she used a beautiful crystal rosary, until Dr. Plinio gave her another, from Aparecida. She most certainly never forgot her son's words as he presented her with this modest but meaningful gift:

“My dear, as you can see, this is a very humble rosary. It is just to remind you that when I was in Aparecida, I prayed for you.”

Despite its simplicity, Dona Lucilia started to use it because it was



Mário Shimoda

Statue of Our Lady of Graces
which Dona Lucilia kept
in her room

“My son remembered me with special affection before Our Lady of Aparecida.”

One invocation that especially touched the maternal soul of Dona Lucilia – always trying to meet her children's needs even before they asked – was that of Our Lady of Graces.

In the small French statue she had in her room, the Blessed Virgin is represented with her arms open, as though, out of sympathy for human weakness, She is eager to distribute the treasures of her graces to those who place themselves under her protective mantle.

Man's spirit is shaped by the object of his admiration. Our souls are like mirrors. If we honour Our Lady, something of her qualities are reflected in us. Undoubtedly, something like this occurred with Dona Lucilia.

Day-to-day episodes from the last years of her life especially portrayed this elevation of soul that was like a sweet fragrance enveloping all of her actions. ✧

CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio.
Dona Lucilia. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, p.554-555



13TH OF MAY



Roberto Salas

El Salvador

One Hundred and Four years of Fatima

It is well known that devotion to the Virgin of Fatima is among those most widely promoted by the Heralds of the Gospel. Accordingly, May 13 could not pass by without special celebrations in the countries where they operate, primarily with a view to offering an act of reparation. In fact, if the world is currently in the throes of multiple crises, it is in consequence of having rejected Our Lady's words and disregarded her counsels.

What will the Blessed Virgin Mary say to her children?

In 1917, She warned of the coming of wars and revolutions; however, humanity ignored the means prescribed to avoid these cataclysms, such as the praying of the Rosary and the Communion of Reparation during five consecutive first Saturdays...

In addition to giving these cautions, the Blessed Virgin promised that She would return. Therefore, Our Lady will visit the world again! When this happens, how will She find us? Will we number among those children who rejected their Mother's requests? God grant that She may find us with our "lamps lit" (cf. Mt 25:1-13), as loving and vigilant children!

However, we must concern ourselves not only with our own personal conduct but also with the actions of all men.

Many, instead of eagerly awaiting the return of Her who is able to deliver them from peril, lead lawless and im-

moral lives. They are ungrateful and unworthy sons, who scorn Our Lady's maternal love and advice. What will She have to say to such children?

Let us do everything possible, therefore, to belong to the other category, that of children who truly deserve the name, and who eagerly await their Mother's return and the implantation of her Reign.

Ecclesiastical authorities

In Spain, Masses in honour of Our Lady of Fatima were celebrated in the Almudena Cathedral in Madrid, presided over by Cardinal Carlos Osoro Sierra, and in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Gijón, Asturias, presided over by the Archbishop Jesús Sanz Montes, OFM, of Oviedo. In Italy, the ceremony took place in the Parish of Sts. Anthony and Aniballe di Francia, where Auxiliary Bishop of Rome Dario Gervasi crowned the Pilgrim Statue on behalf of all.

In the Americas, Bishop Victor Emilio Masalle Pere, Prelate of Baní, Dominican Republic, presided over the Eucharistic Celebration held in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo. In Paraguay, the ceremony held at the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, in Ypacarai, was presided over by the most Rev. Ricardo Jorge Valenzuela Ríos, Bishop of Caacupé.

Images of some of these ceremonies can be viewed on this and the following page. ✧



Eric Salas

Gijon (Spain)



Eric Salas

Madrid



Mexico

Juan Carlos Villagómez



Cesar Galarza

Dominican Republic



Patrick

Italy



Ricardo José Caili

Paraguay



Roberto Salas

El Salvador



Gabriel Monge

Brasilia



Pablo Diaz

Uruguay



Esteban Corpeño

Ecuador



Matheus Sette

Campos dos Goytacazes (Brazil)



Arthur Benedetti

Ponta Grossa (Brazil)



Photos: César Galarza



Dominican Republic – The Marian Missions have continued in this country (photo 1). At Good Shepherd Parish, a group of students from Follow Me Elementary School (photo 2) received their First Communion from the hand of the same Herald priest who oversaw their preparation. And in Our Lady of the Evangelization Parish, thirty-seven youths who had completed their catechesis in the house of the Heralds of the Gospel received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Auxiliary Bishop of Santo Domingo Faustino Burgos Brisman, CM, (photo 3), during a Mass he celebrated on May 22.

Photos: Edito Agostinho Mapanga



Mozambique – In May, Auxiliary Bishop of Maputo and Apostolic Administrator of Pemba, most Rev. António Juliasso Ferreira Sandramo, administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to a group of young people during a Holy Mass which he celebrated in the Heralds of the Gospel's house in Maputo.

Photos: Marcos Sette



Campo Grande (Brazil) – Metropolitan Archbishop Dimas Lara Barbosa invited the choir and musical ensemble of the Heralds of the Gospel in May to solemnize the opening of the Catholic Education Convention with liturgical hymns and various musical selections.



Photos: Francisco Estuardo Ruiz Cruz

Guatemala – Carried by the feminine sector of the Heralds of the Gospel, the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary visited the City Hall of Guatemala City on May 13, and were received by members of the Municipal Police force in formation (photo 3). The mayor, Ricardo Quiñónez Lemus, crowned the statue together with his wife (photo 1) and placed his own municipal emblem into Our Lady’s hands. The statue then proceeded to visit the offices on the seven floors of the building, including the sector of transportation, where Our Lady was warmly received by the director of EMETRA, Jorge Palacios (photo 2).



Photos: José Ribeiro

Nova Friburgo (Brazil) – On May 14, the Oratory of Our Lady of Fatima, located at the house of the Heralds of the Gospel in Nova Friburgo, inaugurated its church bells (photo 1). The event was presided over by Diocesan Bishop Luiz Antônio Lopes Ricci, who blessed the bells and celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving (photos 2 and 3).



Photos: Arthur Benedetti

Ponta Grossa (Brazil) – The presence of the Heralds was solicited for the Easter Celebration for the Military, held on May 26, in St. Anne’s Cathedral. Diocesan Bishop Sérgio Arthur Braschi, (photo 1), presided over the Eucharistic Celebration. And, during Nurses Week, Herald missionaries visited the University Maternity and Neonatal Hospital (photo 2).



Chinese police detain clergy of Xinxiang

In just two days almost all the clergy of the Apostolic Prefecture of Xinxiang, China were arrested by the local police.

On the afternoon of May 20, about one hundred police officers surrounded the factory building which served as the diocesan seminary and arrested seven priests and ten seminarians, who had their belongings confiscated. The Chinese authorities closed the premises and also arrested its director. The ten candidates to the priesthood were sent home and forbidden to study theology.

On the following day, Bishop Joseph Zhang Weizhu, the sixty-three-year-old Bishop of Xianxiang, was also arrested. The prelate, ordained in 1991, has been detained on other occasions.

According to the authorities, the security agents were complying with the regulation on religious activities decreed by President Xi Jinping in November of 2020. The Xinxiang Apostolic Prefecture, comprised of approximately one hundred thousand faithful, is not recognized by the Chinese communist government, which considers its activities “criminal” and “illegal”.

As *Asia News* agency points out, “according to many observers, since the signing of the provisional agreement between China and the Holy See, the persecution of Catholics – especially the unofficial ones – has increased.”

Canadian church elevated to minor basilica

Canada has been granted yet another minor basilica. The title was bestowed in February on St. Finnan’s Church in Alexandria, Ontario, which was first established in 1833. According to the parish pastor, Fr. Jonathan Blake, the designation signifies “recognition of the beauty and history of the church, and the important role it has had in Alexandria and in this part of the province.”

The decree elevating the church to a minor basilica was officially read to the faithful during the Holy Mass celebrated on April 11. It is the third minor basilica in the Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall, and the twenty-sixth in the country.



archivalencia.org

Eucharistic Adoration recommended in Diocese of Valencia

After a long period of closure due to restrictions prompted by COVID-19, the eight Eucharistic Adoration chapels of the Spanish Diocese of Valencia have once again opened their doors to the faithful. They are located in Alzira, Gandia, Valencia, Alcoi, Agullent, Catarroja, Requena and Moncada.

Hundreds of people participate each day in Eucharistic Adoration in these chapels, observing all the sanitary measures established by authorities.

In the Monastery of Bethlehem of the Immaculate, in Agullent, of the Daughters of the Holy Family, and in the Monastery of the Holy Sepulchre, in Alcoi, entrusted to the Institute of

the Incarnate Word, Perpetual Adoration remained open throughout the pandemic, with the religious sisters of these institutes filling all the hours of Adoration.



Reproduction

Another priest murdered in Nigeria

Religious persecution in Nigeria continues. On the night of May 20, a group of armed men stormed St. Vincent Ferrer Parish in the city of Malumfashi and killed the parish priest, thirty-year-old Fr. Alphonsus Bello, kidnapped his predecessor, seventy-year-old Fr. Joe Keke, and left many wounded.

According to Fr. Umoh, Director of Social Communications of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, the body of Fr. Alphonsus Bello was found the next morning on farmland near the catechism school. However, there was still no indication as to the whereabouts of Fr. Keke.

New shrine dedicated to St. Rita of Cascia

A major new construction in honour of St. Rita of Cascia is under way in the Brazilian municipality of Cásia, Minas Gerais. The inauguration is set for 2022, on May 22, the liturgical memorial of this famous Saint.

The complex, located in the Diocese of Guaxupé, is the initiative of a devotee. In addition to a church with seating capacity for five thousand faithful, it will feature a replica of St. Rita of Cascia’s house, a votive chapel, commercial space and parking capacity for almost one thousand vehicles.

The new shrine will be the largest church in the world dedicated to this patron saint of impossible causes.

Gold rosary carried by Mary Stuart at her death has been stolen

In late May, several valuables belonging to Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland were stolen from their display at Arundel Castle in West Sussex, England. The artifacts had been kept since the 16th century by the Duke of Norfolk's family, who received them after the monarch's death. Among the items taken was the gold rosary the Queen had on her person during her execution on February 8, 1587.

Investigators suspect that the criminals entered through one of the windows of the castle, which has recently reopened to visitors. The thieves smashed the display case where the items were being exhibited and fled before police arrived.

Jan Graffius, Curator of the Stonyhurst Collections, who, in addition to historical documents and objects, is responsible for a large collection of relics of Catholic martyrs belonging to Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, northern England, expressed her sorrow: "This is a very tragic loss for his-

tory, and specifically Catholic history," She added: "The true value of certain objects, such as Mary Stuart's rosary, cannot be measured in financial terms."



New acts of desecration in New York

Another act of desecration committed in New York was discovered on the morning of May 14. This time it involved a crucifix which stands outside Brooklyn's St. Athanasius Church, which was thrown to the ground, face down.

As an act of reparation, the faithful of the parish held a prayer vigil the next day, and temporarily erected a wooden cross at the site until the original crucifix is restored.

A few days later, a statue of the Child Jesus was decapitated in the same area of New York. This attack took place on the grounds of the administrative offices of the Diocese of Brooklyn.

The churches of this ecclesiastical circumscription have been notified to be on alert, as hate crimes and vandalism against the Catholic Church are on the increase in the region.

Floral offering to submerged statue of Virgin of the Forsaken

On May 16, the traditional floral offering was made to the image of the Virgin of the Forsaken, which for more than forty years has been submerged in the waters surrounding the lighthouse of Valencia.

At eleven o'clock in the morning, several boats set out from the port of the city, carrying flowers for Our Lady. When they arrived at the locale, fifteen divers made the descent to present the arrangements to the statue, situated at a depth of ten metres. Participants then returned to the Royal Nautical Club of Valencia, where Holy Mass was celebrated.

Devotion to Our Lady of the Forsaken dates back to the 15th century. In 1977, an image of this invocation was sculpted in bronze and submerged in the waters of the sea, at a depth of fourteen metres, in order to guard the city and the sailors. Thirty years later, it was removed for restoration, and was finally submerged once again 2009, in a more accessible location.

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The Price of a Miracle

Jesus did not cure him, but planted a seed of hope in his heart. Persevering in that hope, and trusting in that love, the paralytic continued to beg at the Temple gate, year in and year out, until one day...



Therese Hồng Ân Nguyễn

In the heart of Palestine, there lived a couple who followed the Law of Moses faithfully, and ardently believed in the Lord God of Israel. They had a son, named James, who was paralyzed from birth. A clever and lively boy, he suffered much from his disability, which kept him from playing with the other chil-

dren and meant that he would be unable to help his parents in their work when he grew older.

One day, while he lay pensive in his bed, his mother said to him: “My son, I do not know what God has in store for you, but let me give you a golden rule: never, ever lose hope! When the Lord sees that a person’s

trial has reached its peak, He intervenes.”

These words deeply comforted the child and he never forgot them, but cherished them in his heart.

Many years later, when James had grown up and his parents had died, he had no way to earn a living but by sitting at the gate of the great Jerusalem Temple, relying on the charity of passers-by.

One day, while begging at his usual post, he saw a tumultuous crowd and heard someone say: “Jesus is coming – the one who works miracles!”

“Take me to Him! Take me to Him!” James beseeched two men who were standing close by. They agreed and carried him between them to the Nazarene. Arriving before Jesus, James cried out: “Lord, have mercy on me! I have been paralyzed from birth and badly want to be cured!”

Everyone – especially James – had their eyes riveted upon the Master in anticipation of yet another miracle. With great compassion and gentleness, however, Jesus gave an unexpected reply: “Son, I want you to be healed, and you shall indeed walk, but only on the day that has been set by my Father who is in Heaven.”

At these words, James neither rebelled nor became sad. On the contrary, he was filled with joy to hear



**“My son, let me give you a golden rule:
never, ever lose hope!”**

the Saviour's sweet voice. His resignation to God's will filled the Angels with wonder and gladdened Our Lord's Heart.

Years after that meeting, we find James still begging at the Temple gate. He would fill his days by remembering his mother's advice, and especially Jesus' promise. Some thought he should give up hoping: "You really are a dreamer!" they mocked him. "Now that your Jesus has been put to death, isn't it time to stop waiting for a miracle? How can you cling to such an empty hope?"

When James was alone, he would ponder his sad situation, but without losing faith: "Jesus clearly told me that I would walk one day. I know that He was killed, but I am sure that somehow He will keep His promise. Somehow, I will see Him again!"

And, bolstered in his confidence, he always added this beautiful prayer: "When and how my cure will come, I know not... But whatever comes to pass, blessed be the will of the Lord! God knows what is best for me!"

One day, as he finished this prayer, James saw two men approaching the Temple – one was somewhat elderly, and the other younger. By their look, he was sure they would help him.

"Good sirs! I live from alms. Would you be so kind as to help me?"

The men, whose names were Peter and John, stopped and said to him:

"Look at us."

He looked up at them intently, hoping to receive something. Then Peter said:

"Gold and silver I have not, but what I have, I give you freely: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!" And, taking him by the right hand, he helped him to his feet.

With a great bound, James arose to his feet and started walking. He entered the Temple with them, leaping for joy and glorifying his Creator



Illustrations: Elizabeth Bonyun

"Gold and silver I have not, but what I have, I give you freely"

with a loud voice: "God is good, God is merciful! He gave me faith in His Son! Jesus truly is the Messiah! In his followers Peter and John, He has come back to cure his unworthy servant! He kept hope alive my soul all these years, and I was not disappointed! Blessed be the name of Jesus, and of His Father who is in Heaven! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

All the people, even those who had mocked him, now gasped in amazement: "The Nazarene really does live on forever!"

Later that day, James once again met up with his old acquaintances who used to discourage him. They now looked at him uncomfortably, and after a long and awkward silence, one finally said in a suspicious tone:

"Now that it's only us here, tell us the real story. Where did you get

enough money to pay those men to heal you?"

"After all..." added another, "we all know that nobody would ever do a good deed like that for free. You have surely found the secret to success for any situation. What is it?"

And James replied:

"This miracle cost so much that no gold in the world could pay for it. Yes, the price of this cure was love for God and the hope of my entire lifetime."

From that day on, James went about far and wide, proclaiming the power and the mercy of Jesus to all. And he never tired of saying that even when Our Lord seems to ignore our requests, he never disappoints those who trust in Him. In His tenderness and compassion, He always wants what is best for His children. ✧

THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

- 1. St. Aaron.** Priest of the Old Testament, from the tribe of Levi, brother of Moses.
- 2. St. Monegundis,** hermitess (†c. 557). With her husband's consent, she withdrew to a grotto in the vicinity of Tours, France, to lead a hermitic life.
- 3. St. Thomas,** Apostle.
St. Heliodorus, bishop (†fourth-fifth century). Disciple of St. Valerianus of Aquileia, he participated in the Council of Aquileia in 381, against the Arian heresy.
- 4. 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time.**
St. Elizabeth, queen (†1336 Estremoz - Portugal).
Blessed Catherine Jarrige, virgin (†1836). Dominican tertiary; during the French Revolution, she helped priests who had not taken the revolutionary oath, supplying them with bread and wine for the Eucharistic celebration.
- 5. St. Anthony Maria Zaccaria,** priest (†1539 Cremona - Italy).
St. Athanasius of Jerusalem, deacon and martyr (†451/452). Deacon from the Church of the Resurrection, murdered by the heretic monk Theodosius, whose wickedness he had censured during the Council of Chalcedon.
- 6. St. Maria Goretti,** virgin and martyr (†1902 Nettuno - Italy).
St. Nazaria of St. Teresa March Mesa, virgin (†1943 - Buenos Aires). Spanish nun who founded the Congregation of the Missionary Crusaders of the Church in Bolivia.
- 7. St. Pantaenus of Alexandria** (†third century). A man of great culture who, for love of God's Word, set out for the Far East to spread the Gospel.



St. Henry II - Church of Maria dell'Anima, Rome

- 8. St. Landrada,** abbess (†690). Spiritual daughter of St. Lambert and first abbess of the Benedictine monastery of Bilzen, in Belgium.
- 9. Sts. Augustine Zhao Rong,** priest, and companions, martyrs (†17th-20th-century China).
Blessed Fidelis Chojnacki, martyr (†1942). Capuchin religious arrested during the occupation of Poland and sent to Dachau concentration camp.
- 10. St. Amalberga,** virgin (†eighth century). Born in Rodingi, Belgium, she was educated in Bilzen by St. Landrada and received the veil of the consecrated virgins from St. Willibrord.
- 11. 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time.**
St. Benedict, abbot (†547 Monte Cassino - Italy).
St. Leontius, bishop (†c. 570). He stood out in Bordeaux, France as a builder and restorer of places of worship.
- 12. St. Agnes Lê Thị Thành,** martyr (†1841). Mother of a family killed in Vietnam, during the reign of Emperor Thiệu Tri, for hiding a priest in her house.
- 13. St. Henry II,** Emperor (†1024 Grone - Germany).
St. Ezra, priest and scribe who, upon return from the Babylonian exile, gathered together the dispersed Hebrew people and strove to teach and put into practice the Law of the Lord in Israel.
- 14. St. Camillus de Lellis,** priest (†1614 Rome).
St. Toscana, widow (†1343/1344). After her husband's death, she cared for the sick in the hospital of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in Verona, Italy.
- 15. St. Bonaventure,** bishop and Doctor of the Church (†1274 Lyon - France).
St. David, bishop (†c. 1082). English Cluniac religious, sent as a missionary to evangelize the Swedes.
- 16. Our Lady of Mount Carmel.**
Blesseds John Sugar, priest, and **Robert Grissold,** layman, martyrs (†1604). Tortured and killed during the reign of James I of England, the first for exercising his priestly ministry, and the second for aiding him.
- 17. Blesseds Ignatius of Azevedo,** priest, and **thirty-nine companions,** martyrs (†1570 Canary Islands - Spain).

St. Leo IV, Pope (†855). Defender of justice and apologist of the primacy of Peter.

18. 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Simon of Lipnica, priest (†1482). Franciscan priest renowned for his preaching. During an epidemic in Krakow, Poland, he served the sick and eventually died after contracting the illness.

19. St. Macrina, virgin (†379).

Sister of Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Peter of Sebaste. Well-versed in Sacred Scripture, she withdrew to lead a solitary life in the monastery of Annesi, in the north of Turkey.

20. St. Apollinaris, bishop and martyr (†c. second-century Ravenna - Italy).

St. Joseph Barsabbas, disciple of Jesus. Proposed by the Apostles, along with St. Matthias, to take the place of Judas.

21. St. Lawrence of Brindisi, priest and Doctor of the Church (†1619 Lisbon).

St. Praxedes, virgin (†c. 491). Said to be the daughter of the Roman Senator Pudens, who was converted by St. Peter. The Basilica in Esquilino is named after her.

22. St. Mary Magdalene.

St. Anastasius, monk (†662). Disciple of St. Maximus the Confessor, he died in Caucasus, after having endured prison and torture for the true Faith.

23. St. Bridget of Sweden, religious (†1373 Rome).

St. Ezekiel, prophet. Censured the people of Israel for their



St. Elizabeth of Portugal exorcizing a possessed youth - Church of the Third Order of St. Francis, Salvador (Brazil)

infidelities and prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem.

24. St. Charbel Makhlof, priest (†1898 Annaya - Lebanon).

St. Kinga, religious (†1293). Daughter of the Hungarian King, she married the Prince of Krakow, and both lived in perfect chastity. After his death, she became a Poor Clare in the monastery she founded.

25. 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. James the Greater, Apostle.

St. Olympias, widow (†408). Being widowed at a young age, she dedicated herself to God's service in Constantinople, and

was a faithful collaborator of St. John Chrysostom.

26. St. Joachim and St. Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Blesseds Vincent Pinilla and Manuel Martín Sierra, priest and martyrs (†1936). Violently dragged out of a church and shot to death during the Spanish Civil War.

27. Blessed Mary Magdalene Martinengo, abbess (†1737).

From a noble family, she entered the Capuchin convent of Brescia. She was favoured with mystical phenomena and left writings that reveal her extraordinary spirituality.

28. St. Samson, abbot and bishop (†c. 565). He spread the Gospel and monastic discipline in Brittany, France. He founded the Abbey of Dol.

29. St. Martha.

St. Louis Martin, father of a family (†1894). Father of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus. He led an exemplary married life with his wife, St. Zélie Guérin Martin.

30. St. Peter Chrysologus, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†c. 450 Imola - Italy).

Sts. Maxima, Donatilla and Secunda, virgins and martyrs (†304). Killed in present-day Tunisia during the Diocletianic persecution for refusing to burn incense to the idols.

31. St. Ignatius of Loyola, priest (†1556 Rome).

Blessed John Colombini, religious (†1307). Wealthy merchant of Siena (Italy), he abandoned everything to embrace a life of extreme poverty and founded the Order of the "Jesuati".

The Throne of the King of Kings

The Saviour was born poor and was known as “the carpenter’s son.” How He lowered himself to raise us up! He seems to be the only king who did not want a throne for himself... But is that really so?



Lorena Mello

Since ancient times, in the most varied civilizations and cultures, the figure of a sovereign has always signified the pinnacle of society. The head of a people was one who stood out for his martial abilities, dominant character, natural gifts or noble lineage. Among the Hebrews, the first two monarchs, Saul and David, were elected directly by God.

Notwithstanding different customs, a king never lacks a throne. Who devised this object? Who was the first ruler to sit on one? Its origins disappear on the horizon of long-distant millennia... Whatever the case, this word denotes not only a type of chair, but

it also implies power, command, and royalty.

In Scripture we find many passages referring to it, such as the following: “all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits upon his throne” (Ex 11:5). And in the promise made by the Almighty to the prophet-king concerning his son Solomon, in whose person the Messiah was foretold, it is stated:

“He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. [...] And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before Me; your throne shall be established for ever” (2 Sm 7:13, 16).

In the New Testament, the term takes on supernatural splendour when the Archangel Gabriel uses it to announce to Mary that the Lord would give the throne of David to the One whom She would conceive (cf. Lk 1:32). Jesus himself promises a throne to each of the Apostles when He himself is seated on His triumphal throne (cf. Mt 19:28). Finally, St. Paul encourages us to “with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

The doctrine of the Church teaches that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, being eternal God and identical with the Father



Our Lady of Coromoto - Tabor Formation House, Caieiras; in background, Throne Room of the Palace of Fontainebleau (France)

Timothy Ring

and the Holy Spirit, left behind, as it were, His glory in Heaven to become mortal and bring about the Redemption of mankind. He not only wished to assume our nature, but also to undergo the sufferings to which we are subjected. He chose for himself what was most humiliating in order to give to us, with divine largesse, the wonders of grace.

And so He, the King of kings, was born poor and was known as “the carpenter’s son.” How the Saviour lowered himself to raise us up! He seems to be the only sovereign who did not want to have a throne of His own... But is that really so?

Jesus did, in fact, renounce everything that would reveal His natural kingship – for He was the son of David! – But He did not disregard the symbolic role of the throne. He chose for himself the most extraordinary one possible: it was not made of gold or ivory, nor was it studded with precious stones; it had no soft and pleasant cushions, nor was it adorned with heraldic symbols. His royal seat was Mary Most Holy! That is why an innocent Christmas carol says: “A virginal throne, more beautiful and more sublime than Heaven, has welcomed Him.”

Christ is the King who possesses the most exalted throne that has ever been or will be in history. And this

same honour He reserves for those who faithfully persevere in the midst of trials, struggles and persecutions: “I will grant him to sit with Me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne” (Rv 3:21).

Let us have recourse to Our Lady with entire filial confidence, never discouraged by our miseries. She cherishes us with unfathomable love and affection, and asks only one thing of us: that we abandon ourselves, full of faith, to her care. When we draw our last breath, God Incarnate will fulfil His promise and share His throne of glory with us: the amiable and gracious lap of Mary. ✧



Francisco Lecaros

The Eliatic Mark and Devotion to Mary

The entire prophetic cohort of Mount Carmel would arise from Elijah the Tishbite, to be guided after his departure for Heaven by Elisha. It would endure for centuries and give origin to the Carmelite Order, dedicated to the praise of the Virgin. Perfect devotion to Mary can only be attained by participating in the spirit of Elijah the prophet.

This Eliatic mark distinguishes the true servants of Our Lady, furnishing them with zeal for the glory of God, the agility of eagles in divine contemplation and holy wrath towards the demons and the children of darkness.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP