



HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Vol. 16, No. 172
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*In the World,
But Not of the World*



Most Blessed and Chaste Embrace

On August 20, 1815, at Holy Communion, my Lord deigned to establish His throne in my poor heart. Ah, what a grace! It is impossible to manifest the love, the affection, the extraordinary charity my gracious Lord communicated to me, coming to me with great joy, accompanied by the noblest courtiers of the heavenly court. He came to me as an amiable prince and, overflowing with love, said to me: “How it pleases Me to reign in you! Daughter, whoever desires Me, let him go to you and there he will find Me affable, benignant and merciful.”

Hearing these loving words, my soul was immersed in the plenitude of God’s infinite mercies. While my soul experienced the most intimate union that could possibly be imagined and received the chaste embraces of its heavenly Spouse, amid these embraces it rejoiced in the most blessed immersion in His infinite mercies. Once again He made me hear His sweet voice. However, it was not His voice, but His way of addressing me that was completely new, and my soul well understood His tender affections and the harmonious tones of His charity. Gently, then, He said to me: “I have set my throne in you. O daughter, object of my indul-



Portrait of Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora at age twenty-two

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gence, I am pleased to dwell in your soul; receive the fullness of my mercies.”

At these words, I felt my soul submerged in an incredible torrent of living water that gushed from an enormous mountain. This remarkable favour kept my spirit absorbed in God for many hours, and moreover imparted the most singular inspirations and memories over several days.

Blessed Elizabeth Canori Mora

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CONTENTS

<i>Our Readers Write</i>	4		<i>A Ship Without a Commander?</i>	34
<i>The Porous Fence and the Blank Standard (Editorial)</i>	5		<i>A Lady from Better Times</i>	36
	6		<i>Heralds Worldwide</i>	40
<i>The Voice of the Popes – The Sin of the Century</i>	6		<i>Gospel Commentary – Blessed We Will Be, if We Desire the Things of Heaven!</i>	8
	14		<i>Church and World Events</i>	44
<i>The Peace of Christ and the Peace of the World</i>	14		<i>The Holy Lady Who Will Not Enter Heaven</i>	20
	22		<i>Story for Children... – Where Will I Live?</i>	46
<i>I let the reader choose the title of this article</i>	22		<i>Public Opinion and Key Men</i>	26
	30		<i>The Saints of Each Day</i>	48
<i>Blessed Humbeline de Jully – To Love Is to Serve... Always Smiling!</i>	30		<i>While the King Sleeps...</i>	50



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OUR READERS WRITE



A CONTAGIOUS LOVE FOR MARY MOST HOLY

Only a person with great love and devotion for Our Lady would be able to compose the scenes described on the back cover of the January issue as if he had been there, contemplating the exchange of tenderness and affection between Her and Jesus...

That person is, without a doubt, Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias. I hope one day to firmly embrace him and tell him how grateful I am for the love he has for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is contagious!

Benício Adelio
Via revistacatolica.com.br

CONFIDENCE: THE SOLUTION FOR EVERYTHING!

Congratulations for another edition of the magazine! For about a year now I have been delighted to read the articles in it, but the article *An Invitation to Confidence*, published in December, left me speechless.

We live in a world full of uncertainties, from the pettiest problems, often encountered on a daily basis, at work and in society, to other more serious ones, caused by fear when we see the news of natural disasters.

Knowing that the solution for all of them is confidence in God and in His Mother left me content and even relieved. Thank you for everything, Heralds.

Renato Souza Dias
Porto Velho – Brazil

TWO DECADES AT THE SERVICE OF TRUTH

It is impressive to see how throughout the history of the Church the Holy Spirit has raised up men and women who, at first glance, might pass un-

noticed in the midst of such a chaotic world and so much information. But those who look attentively, with hearts full of good will, perceive that they are not ordinary men and women.

This is what happens when we consider the Heralds of the Gospel, the apostolate they carry out in the world and their direct action in society, as appears in the article *Two Decades at the Service of Truth*, published in January. It is an enormous grace to be able to read this material and to receive, each month, an account of a small part of what they have done throughout the world.

Thank you to all those who have given their lives to this “Chivalry” of Our Lady! Thank you for these twenty years of service to the Church, to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to Mary Most Holy. Only in Heaven will you know the good that you do for us, ordinary men and women, the world over!

Kevin Edmundo
Via revistacatolica.com.br

CHRIST: THE LIGHT OF TRUE SUCCESS

Failed Missions... or Promising Ones? was an excellent article – very inspiring. It makes us realize that the human sense of failure should never contaminate the mind and life of true Christians. Truly, God’s view is completely different from the human perspective.

Our condition as sinners constantly moves us to discouragement when we think we have failed in our calling. May God increasingly show us the light of true success, which is Christ Himself. May we understand once and for all that we have already won! May our eyes transcend the limited temporal vision and turn towards Heaven, in search of the eternal! Finally: may we be able to conquer in a definitive way during these times, when so many offend God!

Congratulations, Sr. Adriana Sánchez! A very beautiful article!!! I eagerly look forward to more articles from you.

Mallysson Nóbrega
Via revistacatolica.com.br

“THE REVENGE OF THE MEDIOCRE”

The article *The Revenge of the Mediocre*, commenting on the Gospel in the January issue, is extraordinary. How history repeats itself!

Nothing more malicious than the union of mediocrity with pride... “we will see sentiments of comparison, of antipathy and of coldness appear. This is mediocrity, offended by the power of grandeur, and its vengeance will be felt in a terrible way.”

But the resurgence of the Church will come about through that “pure white and uncontaminated lily,” born of Mary Most Holy and capable of overcoming with its radiance the darkness of the night.

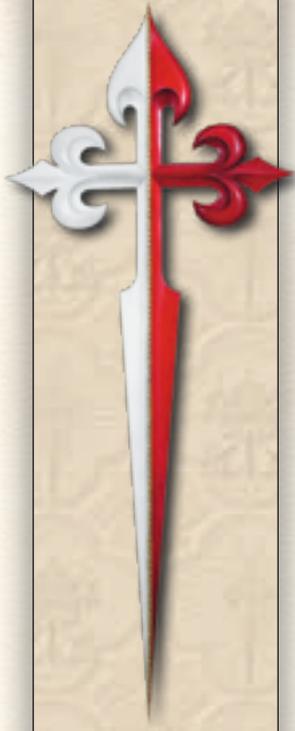
Yvette Castillo
Via revistacatolica.com.br

SERIOUS AND RESPECTFUL JOURNALISM, WITH NO INTENTION OF DENIGRATING

The capacity demonstrated by Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira to identify the wonders of the Catholic Church in all and any area of life is impressive. Even in an initially small periodical without influence, which became the voice of the Catholic Church in those bygone days of São Paulo, as is described in the article *Model of Catholic Journalism in the Fight for the Church*, published in the January magazine.

Serious and respectful journalism, well-documented and not aimed at denigrating, but only at expounding true information and Catholic doctrine. How sorely do we need journalism along these lines today!

Marcelo Arruda
Via revistacatolica.com.br



THE POROUS FENCE AND THE BLANK STANDARD

There is a peculiar parable, no doubt known to some of our readers, which sheds some light on the present moment for Catholics who truly want to embrace the right path.

There was once a young man sitting on a fence. On the right side were God and His children; on the left, Satan and his cohorts. The youth, brought up in a Catholic home, hesitated between joining the Lord's side or that of the devil and his attractions – that is, the world and the flesh.

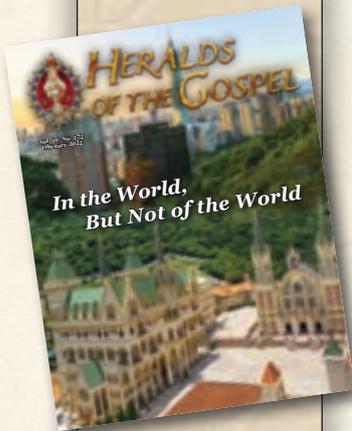
After a time, still undecided, he noticed an essential difference between the two groups. While the friends of the Most High shouted insistently “Come down on this side!” the devil's henchmen remained silent. Then the young man asked Satan, “Why do God's followers call me, while your gang says nothing?” To his surprise, the cursed angel replied, “Because the fence is mine!” In fact, there is no middle ground: the fence already has an owner...

This story illustrates the eternal irreconcilability between light and darkness (cf. 2 Cor 6:14), between the children of God and the servants of Satan, in short, between the race of the Virgin and the race of the Serpent (cf. Gn 3:15).

This incompatibility was highlighted by Jesus by means of metaphors taken from the animal kingdom. The children of light are like sheep that follow the voice of the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn 10:27). The Good Shepherd sends them among the wolves (cf. Mt 10:16), that is, to the other side of the “fence”; but with the recommendation to never conform to it: “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil” (Mt 5:37).

Already in the early days of Christianity, the disciples of Jesus were recognized for their good deeds, as opposed to the depraved customs of the Gentiles who surrounded them. Thus the *Letter to Diognetus* testifies in their regard: “They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of Heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. [...] To sum up all in one word, what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world.”

Let us return to the opening example. As in the Ignatian metaphor of the *Spiritual Exercises*, on one side are the followers of the standard of Christ; on the other, those of Lucifer. The young man sitting on the fence thinks he is immune to the onslaughts of both. However, it is at the porous borders that the bloodiest wars take place. Therefore, those who go through life never taking a side will be destined to follow a blank standard for all eternity: that of those who, denying the high ideals of the Faith, embrace the consensus of the world. The love of the Father will not be in them (cf. 1 Jn 2:15). ✧



Top, City of Taipei (Taiwan); below, view of Tabor Formation House, Caieiras (Brazil)

Photos: CEphoto, Uwe Aranas (CC by-sa 3.0) / Thiago Tamura Nogueira



The Sin of the Century

Contemporary man lives under the threat of an eclipse of conscience, leading to the obscuring of the sense of God and the disappearance of the sense of sin. This crisis can only be resolved by a clear reminder of the principles that the moral teaching of the Church has always upheld.

Over the course of generations, the Christian mind has gained from the Gospel, as it is read in the ecclesial community, a fine sensitivity and an acute perception of the seeds of death contained in sin, as well as a sensitivity and an acuteness of perception for identifying them in the thousand guises under which sin shows itself. This is what is commonly called the sense of sin.

This sense is rooted in man's moral conscience and is, as it were, its thermometer. It is linked to the sense of God, since it derives from man's conscious relationship with God as his Creator, Lord and Father. Hence, just as it is impossible to eradicate completely the sense of God or to silence the conscience completely, so the sense of sin is never completely eliminated.

The "deadening" of consciences

Nevertheless, it happens not infrequently in history, for more or less lengthy periods and under the influence of many different factors, that the moral conscience of many people becomes seriously clouded. "Have we the right idea of conscience?" – I asked two years ago in an address to the faithful. "Is it not true that modern man is threatened by an eclipse

of conscience? By a deformation of conscience? By a numbness or 'deadening' of conscience?"

Too many signs indicate that such an eclipse exists in our time [...].

It is inevitable therefore that in this situation there is an obscuring also of the sense of sin, which is closely connected with the moral conscience, the search for truth and the desire to make a responsible use of freedom. When the conscience is weakened, the sense of God is also obscured, and as a result, with the loss of this decisive inner point of reference, the sense of sin is lost.

This explains why my predecessor Pius XII one day declared, in words that have almost become proverbial, that "the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin."

Why has this happened in our time? A glance at certain aspects of contemporary culture can help us to understand the progressive weakening of the sense of sin, precisely because of the crisis of conscience and crisis of the sense of God already mentioned.

A humanism without God

"Secularism" is by nature and definition a movement of ideas and behaviour which advocates a human-

ism totally without God, completely centred upon the cult of action and production, and caught up in the heady enthusiasm of consumerism and pleasure-seeking, unconcerned with the danger of "losing one's soul". This secularism cannot but undermine the sense of sin.

At the very most, sin will be reduced to what offends man. But it is precisely here that we are faced with the bitter experience which I already alluded to in my first encyclical: namely, that man can build a world without God, but this world will end by turning against him.

In fact, God is the origin and the supreme end of man, and man carries in himself a divine seed. Hence it is the reality of God that reveals and illustrates the mystery of man. It is therefore vain to hope that there will take root a sense of sin against man and against human values, if there is no sense of offense against God, namely the true sense of sin. [...]

Overthrowing and downfall of moral values

The sense of sin also easily declines as a result of a system of ethics deriving from a certain historical relativism. This may take the form of an ethical system which relativizes the moral

norm, denying its absolute and unconditional value, and as a consequence denying that there can be intrinsically illicit acts independent of the circumstances in which they are performed by the subject. Herein lies a real “overthrowing and downfall of moral values,” and “the problem is not so much one of ignorance of Christian ethics,” but ignorance “rather of the meaning, foundations and criteria of the moral attitude.”

Another effect of this ethical turning upside down is always such an attenuation of the notion of sin as almost to reach the point of saying that sin does exist, but no one knows who commits it.

Finally the sense of sin disappears when – as can happen in the education of youth, in the mass media and even in education within the family – it is wrongly identified with a morbid feeling of guilt or with the mere transgression of legal norms and precepts.

The loss of the sense of sin is thus a form or consequence of the denial of God: not only in the form of atheism but also in the form of secularism. If sin is the breaking off of one’s filial relationship to God in order to situate one’s life outside of obedience to Him, then to sin is not merely to deny God. To sin is also to live as if He did not exist, to eliminate Him from one’s daily life. A model of society which is mutilated or distorted in one sense or another, as is often encouraged by the

mass media, greatly favours the gradual loss of the sense of sin.

In such a situation, the obscuring or weakening of the sense of sin comes from several sources: from a rejection of any reference to the transcendent in the name of the individual’s aspiration to personal independence; from acceptance of ethical models imposed by general consensus and behaviour, even when condemned by the individual conscience; from the tragic social and economic conditions that oppress a great part of humanity, causing a tendency to see errors and faults only in the context of society; finally and especially, from the obscuring of the notion of God’s fatherhood and dominion over man’s life.

Loss of the sense of sin within the Church

Even in the field of the thought and life of the church, certain trends

The obscuring of the sense of sin comes from a rejection of the transcendent and the acceptance of models imposed by general consensus

inevitably favour the decline of the sense of sin.

For example, some are inclined to replace exaggerated attitudes of the past with other exaggerations: From seeing sin everywhere, they pass to not recognizing it anywhere; from too much emphasis on the fear of eternal punishment they pass to preaching a love of God that excludes any punishment deserved by sin; from severity in trying to correct erroneous consciences they pass to a kind of respect for conscience which excludes the duty of telling the truth.

And should it not be added that the confusion caused in the consciences of many of the faithful by differences of opinions and teachings in theology, preaching, catechesis and spiritual direction on serious and delicate questions of Christian morals ends by diminishing the true sense of sin almost to the point of eliminating it altogether? [...]

The restoration of a proper sense of sin is the first way of facing the grave spiritual crisis looming over man today. But the sense of sin can only be restored through a clear reminder of the unchangeable principles of reason and faith which the moral teaching of the church has always upheld. ✧

Excerpts from:
ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Reconciliatio et pœnitentia,
2/12/1984



Broadway, Manhattan

Mattias Garabedien (CC by-sa 2.0)



Andreas F. Borchert (CC by-sa 3.0)

The Sermon on the Mount - St. Patrick's Church, Coleraine (Ireland)

✠ GOSPEL ✠

¹⁷ Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of His disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. ²⁰ And raising His eyes toward His disciples He said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours. ²¹ Blessed are

you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. ²² Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in Heaven. For their

ancestors treated the prophets in the same way. ²⁴ But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way” (Lk 6:17, 20-26).

Blessed We Will Be, if We Desire the Things of Heaven!

In proclaiming the Beatitudes, the Divine Master opens a new religious perspective to humanity, in which adherence to God no longer comes about through the impact of great miracles, but through a true conversion of heart.



Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I – A HISTORY MARKED BY MIRACULOUS INTERVENTIONS

To better understand the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ recorded in the Gospel of this Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, we must situate the episode described by St. Luke in time, calling to mind the history of the Chosen People.

Favoured by God with abundant mystical phenomena and miracles, the Israelites had known great events over the centuries. It is enough to go back to the period of slavery in Egypt, for example, and consider the fascinating journey of Moses, who was saved from the waters thanks to a certain human shrewdness and much divine protection. In the fulfilment of the mission to liberate his compatriots from captivity and lead them to the land of Canaan, he was assisted in a special way by Providence, working a series of wonders, including the portents performed in the discussions with Pharaoh, the ten plagues that ravaged the Egyptian nation, the crossing of the Red Sea on dry ground, the drowning of the pursuing army, and the leading of the children of Israel through the desert for forty years, sustained, all the while, with manna.

Passing over many other memorable events, let us recall the extraordinary deeds of Joshua,

at whose voice the sun stood still in the firmament “and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day” (Jos 10:13); the exploits of Elijah, who “shut up the heavens, and also three times brought down fire” (Sir 48:3); and the glories of Elisha, for “in his life he did wonders, so in death his deeds were marvellous” (Sir 48:14).

Providence wanted the conversion of hearts

However, if we jump forward to “when the time had fully come” (Gal 4:4), we encounter a *sui generis* prophet, sent to make straight the ways of the Lord. His diet, consisting of locusts and wild honey, was certainly strange; he wore a garment of camel hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and preached on the banks of the Jordan. Thin, but full of vitality, gifted with a strong voice, he exhorted his listeners to penance and said he was unworthy to untie the thongs of the sandals of the One who would come after him.

Although John the Baptist did not display any of the ancient magnificence to which the Jews had grown accustomed, “there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem” (Mk 1:5) in order to confess their sins and receive “a baptism of repentance” (Lk 3:3). It

*By a singular
divine
predilection,
the Israelites
had been
favoured with
prodigious
events as
had no other
people*

Our Lord wanted the Chosen People to know the principles upon which He would found His Kingdom on earth, and to assimilate a new religious perspective

was a period of preparation, in which Providence wanted the sincere conversion of hearts, without the need for spectacular miracles.

Our Lord's manner of revealing Himself to Public Opinion was quite different. He sat down at banquets and served Himself at will; moreover, He wore a tunic of excellent quality, made by the best dressmaker in history, His Most Holy Mother. When He made any gesture with His arms, this garment must have fallen in folds of matchless elegance that accentuated the superior quality of the fabric, produced, thread for thread, by the sublime hands of Mary.

As for His miracles, Jesus performed them with such munificence that there was no one who, touching His mantle with faith, or being caressed by His shadow, was not benefited. He healed the sick, cast out demons and even forgave sins, filling those who sought Him with consolation and joy.

The fabulous draught of fish on Lake Gennesaret (cf. Lk 5:1-11), the healing of the paralytic lowered through the roof (cf. Lk 5:17-25) and the cure of the man with the withered hand (cf. Lk 6:6-10) were just some of the impressive events which, already at the beginning of His ministry in Galilee, left the crowds enraptured and amazed (cf. Lk 5:26) and filled the Pharisees with fury (cf. Lk 6:11).

It is in this context that the sermon of the Beatitudes, contemplated in today's Liturgy, takes place. After witnessing so many portentous works, the people needed to take a step further: to know the principles on which our Lord would found His Kingdom on earth, and to assimilate a new religious perspective.

II – THE BEATITUDES AND THE MALEDICTIONS

In recording the Divine Master's activities in the evangelization of Galilee at the beginning of His public life, St. Luke notes that He customarily "withdrew to the wilderness and prayed" (5:16). Further on, he relates one of these occasions, when the Saviour spent the whole night praying on a mountaintop and, at dawn, He called His disciples together and chose the Twelve Apostles from among them (cf. Lk 6:12-16).

Although St. Matthew places the events in a different sequence, many authors consider chronologically correct that proposed here by St. Luke,

according to which the sermon of the Beatitudes took place on the day after the election of the Apostolic College, when Jesus was coming down the mountain.

The multitude awaited Him along the way

¹⁷ Jesus came down with the Twelve and stood on a stretch of level ground with a great crowd of His disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. ^{20a} And raising His eyes toward His disciples He said: ...

Coming from different regions, these people had certainly heard that Jesus had gone up the mountain the previous evening. Desiring to "hear Him and to be healed of their diseases" (Lk 6:18), they decided to wait for Him, gathered in a strategic place through which they knew He would pass on His return.

No doubt when they saw Him approaching from a distance they acclaimed Him and ran toward Him, as verse 19, omitted from today's Liturgy, suggests: "Everyone in the crowd sought to touch Him because power came forth from Him and healed them all" (Lk 6:19).

We can imagine the moment when, amid the general joy, Our Lord moved to a higher elevation and sat down (cf. Mt 5:1) facing the crowd, while the Apostles sat behind and around Him, forming a semi-circle.

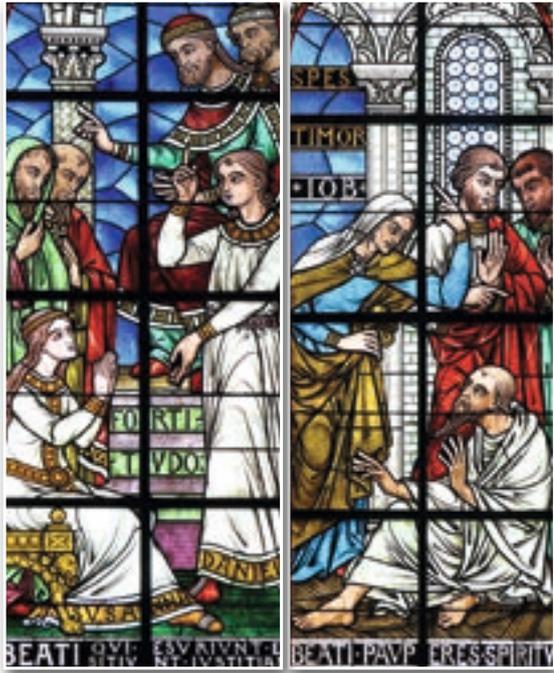
In this poetic scene, one detail of surpassing beauty noted by the Evangelist stands out: the gaze which the Saviour turns towards His chosen ones as He begins to preach.

Heaven belongs to the detached

^{20b} "Blessed are you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours."

We should not interpret this statement of Our Lord as referring to material poverty, as if Heaven were only open to those who on earth were subject to miserable economic conditions. If this were so, pennilessness would be enough to guarantee salvation, and the practice of virtue would have no value for eternity.

Jesus speaks of the poor in spirit, that is, those who are free of attachments and ambitions, aware of their state of dependency on the Lord, who created and redeemed them. In this way, whether



Representation of the Beatitudes - Cathedral of Saint-Front, Périgueux (France)

they own a house, a car or a bicycle, or even when they work hard to accumulate savings, they consider everything as God's property, using material goods with the disposition to willingly dispose of them if it be the will of Providence.

Supernatural hunger

^{21a} "Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied."

It would be too narrow-minded to think that in this verse Jesus praises those who suffer bodily hunger, whether involuntarily, for lack of food or means to obtain it, or of their own accord, by imposing a penitential fast. However meritorious abstention from food may be with a view to mortification, much deeper is the reality to which the Redeemer points in declaring this Beatitude.

Our Lord is alluding to the hunger for doctrine, for virtue, for the eternal vision of God, experienced by those who, as they progress in the supernatural life, feel an ever greater need to know Him and to be united with Him. In a word, it is the hunger for justice, that is, for holiness, which the Evangelist St. Matthew describes (cf. Mt 5:6).

Unlike the physical process of eating, by which the appetite is satisfied when we eat, the hunger

of our spiritual organism for heavenly goods increases, the more we receive them.

Only in Heaven, when we see God face to face, will this appetite be satisfied. Yet already in this world, blessed are those who feed on the Eucharist, the Sacred Banquet that unites the soul to its Creator and imparts the energy to fight for Him.

Happy are those who weep for the offences against God

^{21b} "Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh."

Sensitive to human suffering, Jesus will have pity on the widow of Nain, and before performing the resurrection of her son, He will say to her: "Do not weep" (Lk 7:13). In a similar way, seeing the mourning of Mary Magdalene at the death of her brother Lazarus, He would be "deeply moved in spirit" (Jn 11:33).

However, in announcing the blessedness of those who mourn, Our Lord does not seek only to console men for the sufferings, of soul or body, brought about by the lackings of our nature. It is true that, if well accepted, such adversities will be transformed into joy in eternity, and even in this life impart peace of heart; nevertheless, the words of the Divine Master have a broader scope.

He mentions the weeping, not always manifested outwardly in tears, of the righteous who, afflicted with humanity's situation of offence against God, cry out day and night for His intervention in the world.

Desirous of encouraging these generous spirits, the Saviour promises them laughter as a reward. Indeed, those who are thus concerned for the divine glory enjoy unshakable interior joy, and will be especially glad when God manifests His justice on earth, bringing an end to the present state of disorder and sin.

Persecution, the reward of the good

²² "Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in Heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way."

The Divine Master speaks of those who are free of attachments and ambitions, and who hunger for doctrine, for virtue, and for holiness

In proclaiming the Beatitudes, Jesus intended to raise human sights to an eternal recompense

Evidently, this Beatitude does not apply to just any person hated by people – as is the case, for example, with a bandit or murderer – but to those who become the object of such execration “on account of the Son of Man.”

History shows us how the hatred of the wicked bears down on the righteous with a burning desire to destroy them, because they are a representation of God Himself. Unable to bear the good, they devise every means to eliminate them, as happened to the prophets, who “suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword” (Heb 11:36-37).

Our Lord wanted to warn His followers of the hatred that would rise up against the Church, the visible society to which they should bear courageous, strong and gallant witness. Those who uphold the name and glory of the Mystical Spouse of Christ should not be surprised when they are the object of scorn, insults or imprecations; on the contrary, this is the hour of joy, when the words of the Redeemer are fulfilled and His true disciples are revealed!

When these circumstances pass, the righteous lament: “What a pity it was so brief! I long for the time when I was cursed, persecuted and hated!” And they react thus not because of the re-

ward they will receive in Heaven, but because of their desire to experience the same hatreds as the Redeemer, who offered no compromises to the wicked.

St. Matthew records eight Beatitudes; St. Luke, only four, but, showing himself very emphatic in this matter, he adds four impressive maledictions.

The vice most detrimental to eternal salvation

²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.”

How should we understand this reproof of the Divine Master against the rich? After all, the Church herself presents many wealthy people as an example of sanctity, raising them to the glory of the altars. Over the course of history, how many kings and noblemen have reached a high degree of perfection in the midst of opulence, managing their goods with complete detachment!

The wealth condemned by Jesus in this verse is that of the heart, through which man removes God from the centre of his thoughts and places himself there, judging himself to be a colossus. Dominated by selfishness, he finds his “consolation” in whatever satisfies his self-love, however trivial and fleeting, and little by little, he loses his taste for the sublimities of Heaven.

Nothing is more harmful to salvation than this vice, as Our Lord will warn on another occasion: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God” (Mt 19:24).

Eternal destiny of those who embrace sin

²⁵ “Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep.”

When man tries to fill with sin the longing for the infinite that only God can completely satisfy, he will always want more,



Sharon Mollerus (CC by-sa 2.0)

Detail of the Final Judgement, by Fra Angelico - Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, City of Boston

to the point of becoming its slave (cf. Jn 8:34). It is the “abundance” demanded by disordered passions, which lead the soul to turn towards creatures, turning its back on the Creator.

Whoever dies in such a condition is not fit to enter Heaven. That is why Jesus is incisive in these two curses, making a clear allusion to hell, where “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 13:42).

In fact, the condemned suffer the most terrible hunger: the privation of God, which is never satisfied, and is called the pain of loss. They want to be with Him, but they feel eternally rejected, and for this reason they long to destroy Him or to annihilate themselves. Since they can accomplish neither, they are always in a state of extreme despair.

26 “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way.”

In this verse, the Divine Master warns against the risk of accommodating oneself to the ways of the world, of which one cannot be a good friend without being an enemy of God (cf. Jas 4:4). In this way He highlights an important truth: our life on earth is made up of struggle and contradiction, and if we are authentic disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we will, like Him, tread the way of the Cross.

Taken together, the Beatitudes and the maledictions put us in the perfect perspective to wisely contemplate reality and to face life’s difficulties, until the moment when we appear before the Lord to be judged: on one side will be the splendours of Heaven, the goodness and power of God; on the other, hell, suffering and our own misery.

III – LET US LIVE FOR HEAVEN!

In this Sunday’s First Reading, the prophet Jeremiah offers us a striking image of the misfortune of those who put their hope in passing things and not in eternal goods:

“Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys

no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth” (17:5-6).

This is the great test of all the baptized: will they cling to what is merely human and earthly, forgetting their condition as children of God, or live for eternal realities, devoting to them the best of their energies?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Our Lord teaches that Providence consoles us and makes us blessed here on earth when, in the midst of battles and sorrows, we keep our eyes on Heaven, knowing that “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). But if, on the contrary, we seek our own satisfaction in the follies of the devil, the world and the flesh, we make ourselves worthy of the “woe” pronounced by Our Lord.

Here we need to examine our conscience and ask ourselves: am I blessed or cursed? What is certain is that if we place ourselves in Our Lady’s hands and place all our trust in Her, through Her we will receive graces to abandon any vice, however bad it may be. And if we frequently approach the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession, the promise of Jesus will be fulfilled us: “he who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life” (Jn 6:54).

Let us ask that they transform us, instilling in our hearts a desire for the things of Heaven. ✧

If we seek our own satisfaction in the follies of this world, we make ourselves worthy of the “woe” declared by Our Lord



The Peace of Christ and the Peace of the World

Our Lord said: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” What is this peace that Christ gives us, which the world cannot offer?



Ney Henrique Meireles

If we were to ask the people of today what they most desire for themselves and for the world, the majority would certainly answer: peace! St. Augustine described peace as “a good so great, that even in this earthly and mortal life there is no word we hear with such pleasure, nothing we desire with such zest, or find to be more thoroughly gratifying.”¹

Especially in the last century, the desire for peace has intensified, showing itself in different forms.

A good desired, but not obtained

The two world wars deeply scarred humanity due to their violence and de-

struction. As if they were not enough, after the end of the worst one in 1945, Soviet communism continued to terrorize many of the Slavic and Eastern peoples, and the world witnessed new confrontations, especially in Asia and Africa.

In the period that became known as the Cold War, despite the apparent absence of a formal confrontation, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in an arms race that pointed, sooner or later, to a nuclear conflict of tragic proportions. Something similar happened at the threshold of the third millennium, with the emergence of large-scale terrorism.

It is not surprising, then, that the ideal of peace should emerge as an objective to be reached by men tired of blood, death and destruction. What response could the world offer to such calamities? Treaties, agreements between States and meetings among the greatest world powers, with the commitment to preserve peace, have been and continue to be made.

In addition to an encouraging promise, these efforts brought with them a crucial question: would they achieve the expected results? Or did they only amount to grasping at a chimera? Not long after the beginning of these events, people like the renowned Do-



Ernest Brooks

By skilful manipulation, the belief was spread that peace consists in the mere absence of war and in the complete satisfaction of carnal pleasures

British soldiers in 1916, after the Battle of the Somme (France)

minican theologian Fr. Victorino Rodríguez already offered a negative response: “The UN was established to guarantee peace among nations. The year 1986 was declared as the International Year of Peace. However, the desired peace has not been achieved; neither the messianic peace in which the Gospel germinated, nor the Octavian peace in which Law developed – not even when the deterrent power of nuclear defence seemed sufficient to stop men from making or promoting war.”²²

The world’s interest in peace even gave it new meanings, far removed from the true one. In the 1960s, for example, the hippie movement re-sounded with its best-known catchphrase: “peace and love”. Skilfully manipulated, this slogan convinced people that its realization consisted in the mere absence of war and in the complete satisfaction of carnal pleasures.

Faced with this scenario, we should ask ourselves: In the final analysis, what is true harmony? How can we attain it? God Our Lord has said: “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” (Jn 14:27). What is this peace which Christ gives us, and which the world cannot offer?

Peace, tranquillity and order

St. Augustine defines peace as “the tranquillity of order.”²³ These two elements are closely linked – indeed, so closely linked as to be practically inseparable. If dissociated, they tend to become a caricature of themselves.

Order is the right disposition of things according to their nature and their end. We find an image of this principle in the rich and complex organization of the human body. In it, each system has a purpose, according to the organs of which they are composed; these, in turn, depend on the proper functioning of the tissues and cells. We can say, therefore, that the human body



St. Augustine of Hippo - Church of Saint-Martial, Angoulême (France)

How should true peace be understood? St. Augustine defines it, combining two factors: tranquillity and order

is orderly because its parts have a function and purpose which contribute to the good of the whole.

Order must favour the tranquil freedom of the parts. For example, in

a nation where citizens are constantly watched and where the law is enforced under the shadow of fear, the order that is achieved is violent and therefore unstable. It does not generate peace, because it lacks tranquillity.

True tranquillity can be defined as the quietude and calm that comes with contentedness with one’s situation, not out of indolence, self-indulgence or stagnation, but because one fulfils one’s purpose in it. This is what the intelligence experiences when it knows the truth, the will when it possesses the good, or a child when in the arms of its mother, because it “knows” that its needs will be met in her care.

In order to constitute genuine peace, tranquillity must come from true order. It was not without reason that St. Augustine defined peace as the tranquillity of order. Failing this, tranquillity is sought for its own sake, and tranquillity in disorder⁴ is then found. This is a spurious security, a deceptive tranquillity, the false peace of which the Scriptures speak: that of stubborn sinners who no longer feel the sting of remorse (cf. Ps 73:4-9) and exclaim “‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jer 6:14). It is this illusory peace that reigns, for example, in a family in which parents give in to every whim of their child with the lying pretext that in this way they can “have a little peace”⁵ or, in the eloquent example given by Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, the pseudo-peace of the swamp where, in the apparent stillness of the stagnant and putrid water, all kinds of deleterious organisms proliferate.

True peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit

Authentic – and therefore Christian – peace can only be understood in the light of divine Revelation. The Holy Church has always recalled the existence of the fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned by St. Paul in the

Letter to the Galatians: “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).

Endowing the baptized soul with the infused virtues and supernatural gifts, God expects of it works worthy of Heaven, which are possible only with the aid of the Paraclete. To the extent that the baptized person allows himself to be moulded by Him, “then man’s operation is said to be the fruit of the Holy Spirit.”⁶

Theology uses this term by analogy with nature. Just as the fruit of a tree is its best and most pleasing product, in the same way the fruit of the Holy Spirit is the human act that proceeds from divine influence and brings with it a certain delight.⁷

Among these fruits, the Apostle lists peace, but preceded by charity and joy. What is the reason behind this sequence?

The fruits from which peace proceeds

Charity is the most important of the virtues and the first of the fruits, the “source and the goal of their Christian practice. Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love.”⁸ Far from being a mere sentiment, it implies the ordering of man towards God in an attitude of filial submission and docile obedience, as Our Lord teaches us: “If you love Me, you will keep My Commandments” (Jn 14:15).

Charity is succeeded by joy because, according to the Angelic Doctor, it is proper to the latter to be “caused by love, either through the presence of the thing loved, or because the proper good of the thing loved exists and endures in it.”⁹ Now, St. John says in his first epistle: “he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (4:16). Through charity, the Lord makes Himself



Francisco Lecaros

The Holy Spirit - Basilica of the Virgin of the Forsaken, Valencia (Spain)

*Authentic peace,
a fruit of the Holy Spirit,
proceeds from the spiritual joy
that naturally flows
from love of God*

present in the one who loves Him and thus gives him possession of the greatest of goods. Spiritual joy, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, arises naturally from love for God.

We will only attain perfect joy in Heaven, where “there will be full enjoyment of God, wherein man will obtain whatever he had desired, even with regard to other goods.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, in this life the happiness that comes from the Holy Spirit gives the baptized a prelude to eternal joy. And when joy is full – to the extent possible on this earth – then peace is obtained, for two reasons.

Only in God does the human heart find repose

First, because peace presupposes “the repose of the will in the stable possession of the good which is desired.”¹¹ For he who is dissatisfied with

the object of his enjoyment is not completely happy, and from this dissatisfaction comes interior anxiety.

It is natural to man to have desires, and in this life we will never be free of them. Daily experience shows that man is never satisfied with what he has, whether in terms of money, physical health or pleasure. This situation places him in a dilemma: to strive continually to obtain more and more earthly goods, in the illusion of finding what he seeks, or to love the only Being – eternal and infinitely good – capable of fully satisfying all his desires.

This truth is expressed in the words of St. Augustine: “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”¹² Isaiah exhorted his followers in this regard, saying:

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness. Incline your ear, and come to me” (Is 55:2-3).

“Let nothing trouble your hearts”

Moreover, the peace that flows from charity and joy demands “the absence of agitation,”¹³ for we cannot properly enjoy a good if disturbances of internal or external origin trouble us.

Man’s life on earth, we all know, is a constant struggle, and the main battle takes place within us. The passions make war on us, and often we do not do the good we desire, but the evil to which we feel drawn. On the other hand, within the tabernacle of our souls, God makes Himself present through grace and warns us through the voice of conscience. The laws of the spirit and of the flesh clash with one another on this battlefield that is ourselves.

To this combat are added illnesses, adversities, misunderstandings and dangers of all kinds. As a consequence, those feelings which are so common to men when they do not react well to misfortune easily arise within us: fatigue, weariness, discouragement, tedium, depression and restlessness...

But a soul entirely open to the action of the Holy Spirit has other dispositions. Those who love God alone are not troubled by anything because, like St. Paul, they regard everything as rubbish in comparison with the supreme good of gaining Christ and being found in Him (cf. Phil 3:8-9). In the same vein, the Psalmist sings: "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord" (119:1). Nothing can disturb the security of those who know they are with the Almighty: "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom 8:31).

An impossible objective without divine grace

The baptized, having been placed within the supernatural order, elevated to participation in the divine nature and made temples of the Most Holy Trinity, must live according to the demands of this condition, which is impossible without the grace of God.

Inner order, for a baptized person, means leading an upright and coherent life through frequent reception of the Sacraments, prayer and good works. When man sins and loses

The godless are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, while the righteous enjoy peace even in the midst of torments and difficulties

sanctifying grace, he prepares a bad end for himself, different from that for which God destined him. It is obvious that on this path he will not find peace, but frustration and remorse.

Whence the Angelic Doctor concludes that "without sanctifying grace, peace is not real but merely apparent,"¹⁴ since grace brings friendship with God.

The heart of the wicked and the peace of the righteous

Scripture illustrates this truth well, showing that there is no peace for those who are outside the grace of God and violate His Commandments.

The prophet Isaiah eloquently describes the confusion of those who despise the Lord: "the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up mire and dirt" (57:20). The wicked, because they make themselves enemies of the Creator, cannot enjoy true peace. Their thoughts are like "the tossing sea" in which treachery, error and infamy are devised. And in their hearts, stained by the malice of

Tempestuous sea at Porthcawl (Wales); inset, Christ gives His blessing - Cathedral of Barcelona (Spain)



Gustavo Kralj

Queen of Peace, of Struggle and of Suffering

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira



Virgin of Peace - Church of St. Matthew, Lucena (Spain)

Francisco Lecaros

In the Litany of Loreto, Our Lady is invoked as *Regina Pacis*, Queen of Peace. Let us try to analyse the deepest meaning of this title, attributed by Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

The peace referred to in this invocation can be considered from two perspectives. First, that within souls, and secondly, exterior peace, or that of society.

An erroneous concept of interior peace

In order to understand the first meaning, we must first take into account that, in recent times, several concepts and words pertaining to matters of piety have suffered considerable distortions in the way they are defined.

Thus, it is customary to think that a person's inner peace depends on two elements. He is not assailed by any temptation, and consequently, he is not grappling with internal strug-

gles. His spiritual life is calm, relaxed, pleasant, and free of problems. Such a person is like someone seated in an ascending helicopter, in which, without any effort, he will reach heaven in complete peace.

As a result, he has no cross or suffering. He does not experience the afflictions brought on by illness, material needs or family difficulties. For him, everything unfolds in serene and perfect order, without conflicts or adversities that would oblige him to fight. Such is the current concept of inner peace.

A false notion of external peace

Let us now look at the common idea of external peace.

According to the notion propagated today, peace is not the product of justice, of virtue, but of a certain materialistic prosperity. What matters, above all, is economic stability, bank accounts maintained and nourished, pensions guaranteed, people fed, with

their crimes, are "mire and dirt". The Lord of hosts Himself is categorical in stating that "there is no peace for the wicked" (Is 48:22).

The just, in contrast, enjoy true peace even in the midst of torments and difficulties. This is a cause of grief and envy for their enemies, who cannot comprehend how they enjoy such tranquillity. "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace" (Wis 3:1-3).

Christ, Author of peace

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace" (Is 52:7), Isaiah exclaimed in wonder, centuries before the Word became incarnate. And St. Jerome, commenting on this passage, explains: "Our peace is He Himself, who through the Blood of His Cross has pacified everything in Heaven and on earth."¹⁵

Our Lord is the true Author of peace because, as the Catechism states, "By the Blood of His Cross, 'in His own person He killed the hostility,' He reconciled men with God and made His

Church the sacrament of the unity of the human race and of its union with God."¹⁶

Finally, He has obtained for us peace with God, paying the debt that weighed against us, as St. Paul exclaims: "justified by faith, we have peace with God through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God" (Rom 5:1-2).

If you want peace, prepare for war!

It is curious but inevitable that, having set out to deal with peace, we end up turning to the idea of war.

their daily comfort and well-being guaranteed. There are no disagreements over financial matters; everyone lives cheerfully and undisturbed. Then peace reigns in the nation.

Some imagine that, if all peoples found themselves in this happy situation, there would be no international conflicts; no country would want to attack another, and the inhabitants of the world would enjoy a calm and pacific existence.

Did the Queen of Peace not suffer any anguish?

According to this mistaken concept, devotion to Our Lady Queen of Peace would consist in venerating the Mother of God as the protector of this rosy state of affairs, as She is the model of the person who never had to face trials, anguish, or pain. She was conceived without original sin and therefore her entire life was very calm, without difficulties. She had a very good Son and spouse; She resided in a little town called Nazareth, where there was no friction of any kind, and her days were utterly cloudless.

It is true that, at a certain point, her Son suffered and, during the Passion, Mary experienced some grief, from which She soon recovered, resigned.

Shortly afterwards She saw Him ascend to Heaven, and She was happy to know that her Son was in such a good place. That was the end of all problems; She spent the rest of her life in domestic tranquillity, under the filial care of the Apostle John.

This is the idea certain mentalities hold when they speak of Our Lady of Peace.

A title that does not exclude struggles and sufferings

Now, in seeking a correct interpretation of this Marian invocation, we are led to consider that the first intimation of Our Lady in Holy Scriptures presents Her as an adversary of the devil, and as She who would crush the Serpent's head: "I will put enmity between you and the Woman", said God to the serpent, "between your seed and her seed" (Gn 3:15). In other words, there is a fundamental element of opposition and combat against evil in the one invoked as Queen of Peace.

Furthermore, as is inferred from the divine words, all the battles waged by the Church and by Catholics against the adversaries of the Faith find in the Woman, that is, in Our Lady, the first example of courage and of strength to defeat them. So, if peace were simply

the absence of war, how could the Virgin Mary be the Queen of Peace?

There is more. If peace consisted in freedom from suffering or sorrow, how can we explain Simeon's words addressed to Our Lady, according to which a sword of pain would pierce her Heart? In fact, Mary suffered a flood of sorrows at the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. She saw the rise and growth of antipathy, animosity and hatred towards her Divine Son; from Him She heard the prediction that He would suffer and die crucified, and She did not forsake Him for a moment, accompanying Him and sharing in His martyrdom until the *consummatum est* on Calvary's peak, until the burial of the sacred Body in the grave. And She suffered everything in an attitude of adversity and of peace, for the redemption of the human race, to crush the devil and to conquer death.

Thus, the authentic notion of peace does not exclude struggle or suffering. And where the Queen of Peace is, there is enmity against the Serpent and against evil. ✧

Taken, with slight adaptations, from: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XI. N.124 (July, 2008); p.10-14

Two adversaries struggle for hegemony in the heart of man: on the one hand, Our Lord Jesus Christ proposes the one true peace; on the other, the world, with its lies and illusions, aims

at his perdition by presenting a caricature of it.

However, these contenders differ not only in the gift they offer, but also in the means they employ to achieve

their intent. What path does the devil suggest for obtaining world peace? And what ways does Christ offer us? These are questions that we will answer in a future article. ✧

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE. *De civitate Dei*. L.XIX, c.11.

² RODRÍGUEZ, OP, Victorino. *Teología de la paz*. Madrid: Aguirre, 1988, p.9.

³ ST. AUGUSTINE, op. cit., c.13, n.1.

⁴ As Étienne Gilson well explains, "the peace that societies want, no matter what

peace, is in fact mere tranquillity, maintained at any price, no matter the foundations upon which it rests" (GILSON, Étienne. *Introdução ao estudo de Santo Agostinho*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2006, p.329).

⁵ Cf. RIAUD, Alexis. *A ação do Espírito Santo nas almas*. Lisboa: Rei dos Livros; Prumo, 1995, p.128.

⁶ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.70, a.1.

⁷ Cf. LEGUEU, Stanislas. *Le Saint Esprit*. Angers: P. Desnoes, 1905, p.133.

⁸ CCC 1827.

⁹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., II-II, q.28, a.1.

¹⁰ Idem, a.3.

¹¹ RIAUD, op. cit., p.129.

¹² ST. AUGUSTINE. *Confessionum*. L.I, c.1, n.1.

¹³ RIAUD, op. cit., p.129.

¹⁴ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., II-II, q.29, a.3, ad 1.

¹⁵ ST. JEROME. *Comentário a Isaías*. L.XIV, c.52, v.7-8.

¹⁶ CCC 2305.

The Holy Lady Who Will Not Enter Heaven

When God asks that we give up something good, He later repays it in abundance. Therefore, those who know how to be “poor in spirit” in this life will receive “treasure in Heaven”.



Bruna Piva

Our fragile human nature contains two opposing laws within it: that of the flesh and that of the spirit. When we want to do good, it is wickedness that presents itself to us; when we strive for virtue, the desire of our members invites us to sin (cf. Rom 7:21-23).

Since we are subject to this arduous contradiction, the struggle against the evil within us has become the only path to salvation. And to succeed in this struggle, God has given us powerful weapons, including prayer, vigilance, charity, and joy, among others.

Now, just as a soldier does not carry all his battle gear during the triumphal victory procession, some of these weapons of spiritual combat will not accompany us to eternal happiness because they will no longer be of use. This is the case with the virtue of poverty.

A necessity born of sin

Before the first sin, Adam and Eve did not suffer from any disorder of the passions. The latter were always subject to reason, which in turn was subordinate to faith, through the gift of integrity. Thus, they were

able to practise virtue without any effort or struggle, and no inclination to evil ever arose from within. Entirely free, both could enjoy all the wonders of Paradise, which were like God’s “photo album”; through them they could live in the company of their Maker in a spirit of contemplation.

However, in order to test them and crown them with merit, God allowed the Serpent to intrude into Paradise and tempt our first parents to commit the original sin. Seduced by the false satisfaction that eating the one forbidden fruit in that garden of delights would bring them, they sinned and condemned, along with themselves,

all of their descendants to a perpetual interior warfare against their own evil tendencies.

In this new reality, creatures, which had previously represented for them a link with the Creator, came to threaten them with downfall. Their unbalanced passions led them to desire selfishly – and therefore, without a supernatural purpose – the mere enjoyment of all things, which became weights binding them to the world and thus dragging them towards perdition.

Consequently, the need arose for human beings to control their use of material goods and often even to abstain from them, so as to master their hearts.

The Catholic virtue par excellence

Within this context of interior struggle, the practice of poverty trains the soul to turn towards God while man is on pilgrimage in this vale of tears. For this reason, it is not only proper to religious, as some people think, but to all those who wish to be saved.

However, it should be borne in mind that this virtue consists above all in a state of spirit. The mere lack



Francisco Lecaros

Man is subject to a perpetual interior war against his own evil tendencies

The fight between good and evil, by Victor Orsel - Fine Arts Museum, Lyon (France)

of material goods is not sufficient, nor even indispensable, to practise it, as Benedict XVI states: “The poverty we are talking about here is simply a material phenomenon. Simple material poverty does not redeem [...]. The heart of those who possess nothing may be hardened, poisoned, evil, – inwardly full of avarice for the possession of things, forgetting God and coveting external possessions.”¹ *The poor*

in spirit of whom the Gospel speaks (cf. Mt 5:3) are not so much the destitute as those who are truly detached from earthly goods and who use the world as if they had no use for it, certain that its form is passing away (cf. Cor 7:29-31).

In short, poverty of spirit “is in a certain sense the Catholic virtue par excellence, because in order to do the will of Our Lord entirely,” which is our highest end, “we must be detached from all that we possess. Otherwise, when we are asked, for the sake of God’s service, to renounce something that we hold dear, it will be far more difficult for us to conform to the higher divine plan.”²

Loving God in creatures

Yet living the virtue of poverty in this way demands a very important predisposition of soul.

It must be understood that the core of the Christian life consists in loving God. And this must be practised not only *above* all things but *by means of* all things. Just as in Paradise before sin, we must use creatures as a means of raising ourselves to God and serving Him.



A rich person who fears God is more truly poor in spirit than a poor one filled with greed, who ignores his Creator

At left, “Charity”, by Manuel Ocaranza - National Art Museum, Mexico City; at right, “A usurer with a tearful woman”, by Gabriel Metsu - Fine Arts Museum, Massachusetts

If this form of detachment governs our appetites, then we will know how to renounce the goods that are an obstacle on the path to holiness, and to use with detachment those which are useful and necessary to us.

This spiritual struggle for detachment is, of course, extremely arduous. However, it will not last forever. Those who do not give up along the way will rejoice in eternity to see restored in their souls that purity of intention proper to the original integrity of human nature elevated by grace. Once saved, they will receive from God priceless and infinite treasures, for unlike the devil, who promises to give what he in fact intends to rob from us, God, when He asks us to give up something that is good, will later restore it to us abundantly: “And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Mt 19:29).

As St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus said, poverty is holy, but will not enter Heaven!³ Rather, it will be the punishment of those who choose to set their hearts on riches in this life.

Let us be living examples of detachment!

Few virtues have been so distorted by human malice over the centuries as poverty. Regrettably, it is often confused with miserablism – projected even into churches and the service of the altar – with dirtiness, or even with an atheistic philanthropism, which boasts of feeding stomachs, but forgets to save souls...

However, such misrepresentations are nothing but egoism disguised as virtue, which denies to the service of God and neighbour what it wishes to keep for itself. The genuine spirit of poverty, on the other hand, knows how to use all things to love and glorify God.

It is our mission as Catholics to be living examples of the authentic detachment taught in the Gospel. Always working to increase the glory of the Church and to win souls, let us reject everything that weakens us in the love of God, and in this way we will hasten the establishment of the happy reign of Jesus and Mary over the entire universe! ✧

¹ BENEDICT XVI. *Jesus de Nazaré. Do Batismo no Jordão à Transfiguração*. São Paulo: Planeta, 2007, p.81.

² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. O partido de Jesus e o do mundo [The Party of Jesus and that of the World]. In: *Dr. Plínio*. São Paulo. Year XI. No.118 (Jan., 2008); p.12.

³ Cf. ST. THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS. *Não morro... entro na vida. Últimos colóquios [I don't die... I enter life. The final conversations]*. 3.ed. São Paulo: Paulinas, 1981, p.68.

I let the reader choose the title of this article

Many construct false syllogisms with the explicit intention of deceiving. Even more dangerous, however, are those who become propagators of error without realizing it. Could we fit this description?

Ângelo Francisco Neto Martins



Tn one of his famous brilliant quotes, Joseph De Maistre makes the following analogy: “False opinions are like false money, originally struck by criminals and thereafter circulated by honest people, who perpetuate the crime without knowing what they are doing.”¹ These “coins”, in general, have a name: *sophisms*.

Sophistry is flawed reasoning. Although we may err any number of times, from the logical point of view this happens in only two ways: either by reasoning *wrongly* with *correct* information, or *correctly* with *false* information.

But we cannot conclude that every error in thought is a sophism. For this to occur, one more element is needed: bad faith. Now, many construct false syllogisms with the explicit intention of deceiving. But even more harmful are those who turn themselves into

propagators of error, without being fully aware of it. Hence the accuracy of the analogy with the counterfeit coin, pointed out by the celebrated ultramontane author.

This leads me to believe that, if the reader is surprised to learn of this malady, perhaps he will be even more shocked to know that he is possibly suffering from it. . . So in order to prevent – or cure – the disease, I will briefly list five of the most common sophisms of the contemporary world, turning the pen into a scalpel and Logic into Medicine.

Fanatics of anti-fanaticism

It was a drizzly day when a priest told me a curious story: he was talking to a man who claimed to be a good Catholic. The cleric, gifted with a privileged psychological sense, became suspicious: “I see. . . But, just out of curiosity, do you go to Mass every

Sunday?” The answer came with disconcerting assurance: “Oh, not to that point, Father; I am Catholic, but not a fanatic!”

I was intrigued. . . In the past, the criteria for receiving the epithet of fanatic seemed somewhat more demanding. Well, things change with time; perhaps a review of the concepts was in order. Resorting to a good dictionary, I found the following definition under the entry for *fanaticism*: “Obsessive religious zeal that can lead to extremes of intolerance.”²

“*Extremes*.” It seems to me that therein lies the crux of the problem. Nowadays, to be a fanatic it is enough to hold an idea with conviction and have an opponent that contradicts it. Because, as soon as there is a counterpoint, there are two extremes; and where there are extremes, in the mediocre conception of contemporary man, there is extremism or, bet-

ter, fundamentalism. Whoever vigorously sustains a position – any position – is branded a fanatic. Therefore, the proponent of the truth will also be an extremist-fanatic.

Then all human knowledge – precisely because it is based on truth – enters into agony. It begins with arithmetic: someone defends that 3 plus 3 equals 6; another opposes him, announcing that 3 and 3 are 2; an extreme anti-extremist enters, takes the average and affirms that 3 and 3 are 4. Here, we see that the casket is already being prepared for the exact sciences...

Another case: atheists believe – because belief is a necessity – that God does not exist; the Church preaches that He does exist. If we decide to escape “fanaticism,” we will have to reconcile the two currents: God half-exists. This, I believe, would be the graveyard of all ideologies.

The problem lies not in being an extremist according to today’s interpretation of the word – to be decisive in taking a position. It lies, rather, in embracing a false extreme. Or, maybe worse – to use the idolized “maybe” of the fanatics of anti-fanaticism – in being fiercely opposed to taking any side.

Oh, anti-fanaticism, how many fanaticisms have you produced?

Someone might ask: “But what about the principle that ‘virtue lies in the middle?’” I reply: it should be made clear that this Aristotelian maxim adopted by St. Thomas Aquinas is not absolute, first of all because it does not apply to the theological virtues. Moreover, the Angelic Doctor³ explains that, even for the cardinal virtues, it applies only in a certain sense, insofar as these virtues are situated between two opposing vices, generally the excesses and the deficiency of the due measure, as happens, for example, with bravery, which is found between cowardice and temerity. Every virtue is indeed an extreme, insofar as it fully conforms to right reason, in opposition to the vices, which diverge from it. It would be ridiculous to complain that a judge is being too just, or that a politician has been too honest...

A circle with four corners

“I am Catholic, but I am not a fanatic.” The phrase still echoes in my mind, immediately evoking another analogous and equally widespread expression: “non-practising Catholic.”

One wonders what these people mean by *Catholic*. If the qualifica-

tion corresponded to a professional position or honorific title, which one can hold without having to exercise it, or, who knows, if it simply designated one who believes in the dogmas, perhaps they would be right. It would be the so-called “IBGE [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] Catholics” that have been spoken of recently. However, Martin Luther has already done the favour of obliging the Church to clarify for future centuries that whoever believes that only faith, without works, is necessary, is a heretic.

A Catholic in the strict sense is, by definition, someone who practises the Catholic religion. Now, what is a Catholic who does not practise? I have no idea...

This brings to mind a Latin expression from the catalogue of sophisms, called *contradictio in terminis*, a contradiction in terms, which consists in combining two mutually exclusive realities. A square circle, for instance, contains two mutually exclusive elements, because the circular shape presupposes the absence of angles.

Moreover, our beloved mathematics attests to this: 2 is equal to 2. Therefore, 2 minus 2 equals 0. In the same way: Catholic is equal to practis-



Diliff (CC BY-SA 3.0)

If all those who called themselves Catholics frequented the Sacraments, there would be no empty churches

St. Peter’s Church, Drogheda (Ireland);
previous page, “The Conjuror”, by Hieronymus Bosch - Museum of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (France)

ing Catholicism; Catholic minus practising Catholicism is equal to 0.

There is just one God

There was a time when circus beasts were fed on the flesh of men convinced of their religious ideals; bonfires in overflowing arenas had ardent faith as their fuel; swords drew sparks from others in defence of personal beliefs. But those times are over. Or rather, they have been finished with.

So that men would no longer immolate themselves for the truth, they chose to immolate the truth on the altar of conciliation.

“There is one God” (Eph 4:6). The monotheistic religions believe in only one God; therefore, they believe in the same Divinity. “God is one” is a phrase often heard in the most diverse places. This is one of the sacrificial daggers of truth.

Indeed, if Logic were a person, I believe he would have lain dead long ago. And hearing such a sophism, he would certainly have turned over in his grave – turned over twice, since this dagger has attacked a basic syllogistic rule, which demands that the words in the premises not be given different values. Analysing the phrases:

“to believe in *one* God” and “to believe in *the same* God”, we see that they are two different things.

St. Paul himself does not assert pure and simply that “there is one God.” Immediately prior he states: “There is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism” (Eph 4:5-6). Let me translate what the Apostle says in a few words: it follows from the existence of one God and Lord that there is one truth about Him – one faith – and one practice conformed to this truth – one Baptism.

The same Supreme Being cannot simultaneously ordain precepts that are mutually exclusive: to forbid and to permit the eating of pork; to approve and to censure polygamy or divorce; to accept and to repudiate the worship of statues; to proclaim, on the one hand, that there is an eternal reward and punishment and, on the other, that there is no life after death, or that we are subject to reincarnation. God cannot be in contradiction with Himself.

Truth is one and immutable. Where there are different truths, there are two possibilities: either none of the truths or only one is... true. If there is only one God, which is concluded by natural reason, there can only be one authentic doctrine regarding Him.

Beware of those counterfeit coins

At the beginning, I mentioned de Maistre’s consideration of fallacious opinions: they are like counterfeit coins. Well, I have left the two most common ones for the end of this article.

According to the opinion of a statesman of the stature of Metternich – which may sound like heresy to contemporary ears, but every truth has its nuances – “two words are sufficient to create evil; two words which, by virtue of being emptied of all practical meaning, captivate dreamers in a vacuum. These words are *liberty* and *equality*.”⁴

Let us begin with the first. It has, of course, an inestimable value when true. But most of the coins circulating under that name are not authentic.

How to identify the one in your pocket? It is as simple as reading the inscription written on it. The term *liberty*, continues Metternich, is like *religion*. What creed is it referring to? In the same way, what liberty is being referred to? What is meant by liberty?

The *Institutes* of Justinian⁵ state that liberty consists of the faculty to do whatever one wants, *except what the law forbids*. Any society with a minimum of civilization will impose limits on its citizens. Otherwise, chaos will ensue. But what are the boundaries of true freedom?

If on your coin it says “my freedom ends where the other’s begins,” know that it is a forgery, because at the bottom of this idea is that morality is based on a mere accord of peaceful coexistence, with no foundation in absolute values. The benchmark becomes simply convenience itself. Forgive the truculence of the examples: Do you want to finish with your health by committing every kind of excess? Be my guest, as long as you don’t affect my life. Do you want to break up your family? If its members are not offended, what’s the problem? You choose to kill yourself? Go ahead, just don’t create any inconvenience for me doing it... Where will we end up?



There was a time when the majority of men did not hesitate to shed their blood for their Faith

“Taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders”, by Émile Signol - Palace of Versailles (France)

Reproduction

Liberty does not consist in being a slave to one's own instincts and passions, but in our dominion over what we hold most dear: ourselves. It is the coin with which we buy Heaven, for it gives us the possibility of acquiring merit; when it is not counterfeit or vile, it is "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21).

Nevertheless, since this concept is usually not well defined in minds, it is easily transformed into a kind of demagogic and ethereal slogan that everyone loves, defends and seeks... without knowing exactly what it means. This is what Logic calls *equivocality*, that is to say, using a word with several different meanings in order to take your reasoning wherever you want it to go.

What would Terence say?

It remains to speak of equality, for which I would like to refer to a brilliant explanation by Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira.⁶ How many times have we heard: "Justice demands that, from the beginning of life, everyone should have the same opportunities." Is this assertion true?

Let us take the fundamental cell of society: the family. There is a natural factor, mysterious and sacred, which is intimately linked to it: biological heredity. It is evident that some families are better gifted, from this point of view, than others.

There are families in which the artistic sense, or the gift of speech, or medical acumen, or the aptitude for business is transmitted through many



Francisco Lecaros

The proliferation of false ideas about freedom is one of the chief causes of our contemporary chaos

"The Festival of Reason at Notre-Dame de Paris", by Charles-Louis Müller - Holy Cross Museum, Poitiers (France)

generations. Nature itself – and therefore God, who is its Author – invalidates, through the family, the principle of equality at the starting point. Now, why the concern to artificially impose it on property, on culture and on so many other fields?

One of the famous Roman orators, Terence by name, spoke in defence of an idea that later became commonplace in the following adage: "*Duo cum faciunt idem non est idem.*"⁷ Once again, the ancients were right. Even if everyone did and thought the same thing, they would do and think it in a different way.

I don't know what title to give this article

Coming to the end of this dissertation, a difficulty arose: what title should I give it? I thought of calling it *Current Problems*, but the formulation was too hackneyed. It would be the umpteenth article – numbering

well into the hundreds – to use this pompous name to designate the most common phenomenon of our days: problems.

"Heretics!" I cried, based on the witty way Chesterton defined them: "A man whose view of things has the hardihood to differ from mine."⁸ In fact, since there are no longer any absolute truths, this is the only criterion that is still used to label someone with the solemn epithet.

Unsatisfied, I resorted to others: *Does 2+2 Still Equal 4?* or perhaps *The Last Time They Sacrificed Truth, It Rose Again on the Third Day*, but nothing seemed to fit the article in its entirety.

Lacking inspiration, I gave up on giving it a title. It seemed the easiest part and yet... There are certain attitudes of soul so illogical that it really becomes difficult to qualify them. And so I leave to the reader the choice of the title. ✧

¹ DE MAISTRE, Joseph. *Les soirées de Saint Pétersbourg*. 2.ed. Lyon: J. B. Pélagaud, 1870, t.I, p.24.

² FANATISMO. In: HOUAISS, Antônio; VILLAR, Mauro de Salles. *Grande Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa*. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2001.

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.64, a.1; a.4.

⁴ DECAUX, Alain. *Metternich, "cocher de l'Europe"*. In: *Historia*. Paris. N.318 (maio, 1973); p.132.

⁵ Cf. JUSTINIAN. *Institutas do Imperador Justiniano*. Bauru: EDIPRO, 2001, p.25.

⁶ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. O problema dos 4 irmãos [The Problems of the Four Brothers]. In: *Folha de São Paulo*. São Paulo. Year XLVIII. N.14.500 (Feb. 26, 1969); p.4.

⁷ From the Latin: "When two do the same thing, it is not the same."

⁸ CHESTERTON, Gilbert Keith. Heretics. In: *The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton* vol. 1. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986, p.46.

Public Opinion and Key Men

Speaking about the important role of tendencies and of ideas in the confrontation between the Revolution and Counter-Revolution, Dr. Plinio analyses the power of Public Opinion and the influence exercised in society by those he calls key men.



Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

It is possible to establish a real doctrine regarding the power of Public Opinion. To begin with, we might ask ourselves what it would have consisted of in Paradise, before the sin of Adam and Eve. If they had not fallen, and if their descendants had continued to live in Eden, would there have been Public Opinion? What would be its importance and dynamism?

To answer these questions, some observations are required.

The highest degree of truth that can be attained...

As a starting point we must bear in mind that in Terrestrial Paradise man was not subject to error. From which, at first sight, it follows that all opinions would be equal. And this because, if they were not, one would necessarily have to be wrong. Therefore, it was imperative to have an absolute uniformity of thought.

However, a deeper analysis shows us that this conception is erroneous. Since each man discerns in reality some aspect more fully than others do, without it being necessary to say that the other is wrong, it may be af-

firmed that each man is more especially endowed to see a certain characteristic of creation.

Three or four artists who, before the work of a great painter, begin to

make comments, each one with his own peculiar artistic sensibility, sees in the canvas a set of aspects that the others do not see and experiences what the others do not experience, although they are considering the same picture.

Therefore, in a conversation that took place before original sin, there would be no debate, since no one would be in error, but each one would give his opinion to complete the other's thought. Public Opinion on a given matter would therefore be the



If our first parents had not sinned, Public Opinion would be, in Paradise, the ever-harmonious totality of individual impressions

Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise - Basilica of St. Catherine of Alexandria, Galatina (Italy)

totality of everyone's impressions on that question. In other words, it would be the maximum degree of truth that human beings could attain regarding a certain matter.

It is quite evident that Public Opinion conceived in this way would constitute an extraordinary authority for men, an immense natural power, and an equally great source of satisfaction. According to this order of things, society ought to have allowed itself to be enlightened and guided by it, for human beings, in their very essence, were made to think and act in accordance with a Public Opinion.

*... a general consensus,
subject to error*

With original sin, men became susceptible to error, although they continued to have the tendency to allow themselves to be governed by Public Opinion. The latter, in turn, also became subject to error, so that man's situation became distressing: on the one hand, he continued to have a strong desire to agree with Public Opinion; on the other, he felt obliged to exercise control over it.

To disagree with Public Opinion is one of the most unpleasant stances to which man has to subject himself. Let us take a circle of young men in which each one is boasting of the immoralities he has practised. At a certain point, one of them is asked: "And you, what did you do last night?"

If the young man replies that he slept, there is a sort of general disappointment: "This good-for-nothing slept. He's a fool!" And the young man, who was the only upright one in that circle, and who could quite rightly call the others scoundrels, does not have the courage to do so. He remains silent, because the pressure of Public Opinion is tremendous.

Situations like this are difficult to face, given that what others think of us takes on disproportionate import-

ance. It becomes difficult to break with the general consensus, because we are powerfully influenced by the opinions and conduct of others.

*Social contagiousness in
tendencies and ideas*

From this we can draw a concept that we might call the *principle of social contagiousness*.

Let us imagine, by way of example, that we lived with Cardinal Merry del Val, Secretary of State of St. Pius X, who died in the odour of sanctity. Without doubt, the presence of the illustrious and virtuous Cardinal would

One example of contagion on the plane of the tendencies is military parades, which transmit immediate impressions that mark the soul

have a great effect on the whole house in which we lived. At dinner time, he would be at the head of the table and we would instinctively turn off the radio which was broadcasting the latest news. He would begin to speak. And evidently no one would have the courage to ask him questions such as this: "Your Eminence, have you heard the latest joke about the Portuguese and the Turk?"

He would not even comprehend something on that level! He would give such an icy, formal smile that one would immediately understand one's mistake and elevate the tone of the conversation. This contagion of dignity that would be produced by the mere presence of Cardinal Merry del Val could be called a contagion on the level of the tendencies.

Another example, along the same lines, are military parades. Why are parades held to stimulate patriotism? On the face of it, a speech might seem more effective. But in reality, this is not so. The rolling tanks, the cavalry with their bugles and the legions of infantrymen beating their drums, all of this is extremely captivating.



Parade by the infantry regiment, by Alexander Pock - Military History Museum, Vienna

Francisco Lecaros

When the cannons roar and the playing of the national anthem begins, everyone is thrilled. The contagion comes from the mere fact of contemplating the army on parade, just as it would be from seeing a friar walking or a procession in progress. These are impressions that last only a few moments, but that profoundly mark the soul.

There is also contagion on the level of ideas. If we read a certain argument in a book, we end up memorizing it as if it were a subject learned in a classroom. However, if a colleague who has a degree of influence over us were to support that same argument, it would seem to take on life and we would begin to find it interesting. It would become as different from the argument read in the book as a butterfly in flight is from the dead one on display the Natural History museum. It would acquire a new vitality and capacity for penetration. This is contagiousness.

Influence among people and ambiances

We can conclude that no event in social life that is exempt from a Public Opinion effect on the level of Revolution and Counter-Revolution. Two people who converse, if they are not careful, will mutually influence one another. It is impossible for two men to meet without exerting some influence upon each other, however slight.

As a corollary to the previous statement, we can say that a man placed in a certain environment must either exercise a constant reaction of not letting himself be influenced, or,

Those who are key men by divine calling have the mission to make the supernatural manifest by their simple presence



St. John Mary Vianney, Basilica of Ars, Ars-sur-Formans (France); inset, St. Francis of Assisi, by Fra Angelico - San Marcos Museum, Florence (Italy)

even against his will, he will allow himself to be contaminated by it. The reciprocal is also true: the ambience will sustain, from his part, a certain contagion.

Let us take the radio as an example. Who would have imagined, before the invention of this device, that the waves emitted by the *BBC* tower in London would reach us, and that it would be possible to hear them just by pressing a button? Well, that is an image of what happens in the world of souls. Every soul, however obscure and modest it may be, is, in greater or lesser proportions, a sort of *BBC* tower, with longer or shorter waves, but capable of overcoming long distances. The question is to be able to detect them.



Tiago Kruger Galvão

The principle of the key men

This idea leads us to another principle: that of the key men.

There are some men in society whose role it is to radiate something in a particularly intense way. This is true of three categories of persons: those who

exercise this function by divine vocation; those who exercise it by their state in life; and those who exercise it by reason of personal capacity.

Among the first, let us take as an example St. Francis of Assisi. The chronicles relate a fact from his life which, in the realm of tendencies, is truly marvellous.

On one occasion St. Francis invited one of his friars, Brother Leo, to join him as he preached to the people. They left the monastery, walked through several streets of the city and returned. On their return Friar Leo, somewhat confused, asked the Saint what was the sermon they had preached, to which he replied, "Walking through the streets was the sermon that we preached."

This is precisely the application of the principle stated above. To see someone like St. Francis, so poor, so humble, so recollected, so gentle, so profound, so convinced of his vocation, so elevated, so supernatural, is equivalent to hearing a sermon.

Another example of a key man by divine vocation is St. John Mary Vianney. He was not very intelligent and of modest personality. However, just by seeing him preach from the pulpit, from afar, even without being able to hear him, many were converted. The Curé of Ars belonged to that category of men to whom God had given the mission of making the supernatural translucent in some way, so that being near them people felt what the Apostles experienced on Tabor with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

An example of a key man by his state in life

Alongside those who have this mission by divine vocation, there are others who possess it by their state

in life. Men of high social rank, for example, should be emblematic persons, capable of radiating certain truths that preserve the integrity and order of the society in which they live.

We can cite the famous case of Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich during the communist revolution. He was a very tall man with a broad face, a long nose and the characteristic feature of a white goatee. He was a herculean and robust Slav, appearing to have emerged from the woods, but well-groomed and disciplined.

The Bolshevik revolution erupted in his time. The phantasmatic, weak and lukewarm Nicholas II abdicated. Revolutionary waves were unleashed throughout St. Petersburg; agitators ran around shouting slogans and brandishing the red flag, and workers looted the shops they came across. The Grand Duke Nikolaevich, upon hearing of this situation, decided to leave his palace to go to the Tsar and pledge his solidarity. He donned his uniform replete with decorations, entered a large limousine with his adjutant and set off. The inevitable happened. At a certain point, the revolutionaries stopped the vehicle and began to smash the windows, attempting to kill the Grand Duke. He arose and, from the full height of his stature, glaring at the people, gave them a severe tongue-lashing and

ordered them to disperse. They all stepped back and the car arrived at the imperial palace!

The Grand Duke was a man whose duty of state was to reflect the royal majesty, and he knew how to do so. As a military man, he had to maintain discipline, and he symbolized it well enough to single-handedly disperse an angry mob.

In this sense, it must be said that every man should outwardly reflect his function in society. What the French call *le physique du rôle* – to have an appearance in keeping with the role one plays – is something that is demanded of every person. A magistrate cannot have a clownish air; if he does, he is betraying his mission. Besides having an in-depth knowledge of the laws, he must be a man imbued with the dignity of his office. The profile of a dandy does not befit a military man. The priest cannot have the semblance of a layman; and there is nothing worse than a layman who has the air of a priest. Each social role has its proper persona, and there is a persona for each role.

Key man by personal capacity

Finally, there are individuals who manifest this gift of radiating by personal capacity. Often, just by their silence, their gaze, a few words, and by their mere presence, such men generate a whole series of states of mind. Others have the same quality in the field of logic or reasoning: they argue so well that the adversary is crushed by their reasoning.

They are people to whom God has given the task of guiding others towards the good, within the natural order itself. And if someone has this capacity, he is obliged to exercise it. ✧

Taken, with slight adaptations, from: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year II. No.13 (April, 1999); p.11-14

There are key men who, on account of their state, must radiate the principles that their position represents

Grand Duke Nikolaevich, between 1903 and 1904



Reproduction

BLESSED HUMBELINE OF JULY

To Love Is to Serve... Always Smiling!

For this exemplary girl of spirited temperament and abundant natural qualities, the matrimonial path seemed to be the one by which she would reach sainthood. However, God had loftier designs for Humbeline...



Sr. María del Pilar Perezcanto, EP

Reproduction



In the long-ago 12th century, in Burgundy, France, there lived a noble family made up of Tescelin, lord of Fontaines, his wife, the pious Aléthe, and their seven children: Guy, Gerard, Bernard – who would become the great abbot of Clairvaux –, Humbeline, André, Barthélémy and Nivard.

In the castle where this blessed offspring came into the world, harmony and the religious spirit proper to the Middle Ages reigned among all; mutual encouragement to the practice of virtue was their daily bread. They talked about the Creator with all naturalness, and fidelity to the Commandments was the norm. The duties that the Holy Church entrusted to Catholic warriors – to defend it and to love one another – were valiantly fulfilled by Tescelin, whose example his children soon began to imitate.

In the midst of a society that regarded chivalry as the best expression of a man's moral virtues, the six boys of the family possessed all the attributes to become famous and suc-

cessful figures. And for Humbeline, the only girl among these siblings, the future also looked bright. Gifted with an uncommon beauty, sweetness and fortitude, gentleness and intrepidity were united in her, and there would be no lack of suitors on a par with her dignity.

It was easy to foresee a brilliant future awaiting each of the members of this family. What no one could have imagined was that they would shine in history with a glory far greater than that won by human qualities, however

high, and would come down through the ages exalted by the Church with the honour of the altars.

An exemplary mother

Known throughout the duchy for her profound unpretentiousness and generosity towards those in need, Aléthe of Montbard formed the solid foundation of her children's holiness. Of a firm and kindly character, she instilled in their hearts not only a horror of sin but also generosity towards God, to such an extent that all of her sons were able to renounce one good – chivalry – in order to embrace a greater one: the vocation to which Providence had destined them, in religious life.

“I cannot forget,” writes one of St. Bernard's friends, “how this illustrious lady sought to serve as an example and model for her children. Being at home, married and in the middle of the world, she imitated in some way the solitary and religious life, by her abstinence, by the simplicity of her clothing, by her detachment

The young woman was gifted with sweetness and fortitude, gentleness and intrepidity; she would have no lack of worthy suitors

from the pleasures and pomp of the world; she withdrew whenever possible from the agitations of worldly life; persevering in fasting, vigils, and prayer, and compensating by works of charity for what might be lacking in the perfection of a person committed to marriage and engaged with the world.”¹

A fervent devotee of St. Ambrose, Aléthe died on the feast of this Doctor of the Church in 1110, after receiving Viaticum and the Anointing of the Sick. Just before she passed away, she asked those present to recite the Litany of All Saints.

While they recited the aspiration “Through your Cross and Passion, deliver us, Lord,” she sat up, made the sign of the Cross with profound reverence, raised her arms to Heaven and then reclined serenely, entrusting her soul to God.

It is said that of all the children, the one who felt the death of his mother the most was young Bernard, then nineteen years old. Attentive to the voice of grace, Aléthe had well understood that he was specially called by Providence, and she paid particular attention to his formation.

The fruits of this genuine maternal affection soon came to light in an excellent way: at the age of twenty-one, Bernard decided to become a monk of the Cistercian Order, a reformed branch of the Benedictines, then in its infancy and devoid of prestige in the eyes of the world. Many family members, including his sister, were disconcerted by his decision, but this did not constitute the slightest obstacle for him. If such was the will of God, nothing would make him turn back.



The Family of Blessed Humbeline - Church of St. Ursula, Montbard (France); previous page, Blessed Humbeline, by Adrien Richard - Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, Orgelet (France)

Aléthe of Montbard laid solid foundations for her children's holiness, instilling in them, above all, a great generosity towards God

And Bernard would not go alone: having encouraged his brothers one by one to give themselves completely to God, they all followed him. The father himself would end his days as a lay brother in the community of Clairvaux.

The last to leave the world to embrace the ways of perfection was Humbeline, thus completing the “crown of seven heavenly stars that the mother of St. Bernard wears in the Kingdom of Heaven.”²

Lady of fiery character, moulded by virtue

Humbeline had a spirited temperament, which her parents were able to mould into a holy fear of God. It is said that she rode skilfully and took part in daring hunts with her father and brothers. She crossed briars and thorns, and when she fell, she got up with the agility and nonchalance of a warrior. Her beauty reflected the purity of her soul, in which shone the fundamental virtue of humility, which enhances every quality or gift.

As all the brothers became religious, the family properties and fortune accumulated in the hands of the young Humbeline. Shortly thereafter, she married Guy de Marcy, nephew of the Duke of Burgundy. Although she had approached married life seriously, she was soon absorbed by the vanities of the world, indulging in frivolous amusements and pastimes and seeking to make the most of the luxury and pomp that her status afforded her.

A visit to Clairvaux

One day, keenly missing her beloved brother Bernard, Humbeline went to visit him at the Monastery of Clairvaux, of which he was abbot. She was received by another of her brothers, André, who was doorkeeper at the time. On seeing his sister decked out in ostentatious finery, accompanied by a showy retinue, the young religious could not hide his astonishment and disapproval. He asked her to wait while he went to inform the abbot of the visitor who was waiting for him.

A few moments later André returned with a message that caused Humbeline to burst into tears: Bernard

would not receive her. Understanding that her brother's contempt was due to the excesses of luxury with which she presented herself – a sign that she had given in to the illusions of the devil – she recognized her deplorable spiritual state and insisted with André: "I am a sinner, but Christ died for sinners. It is because I am bad that I seek the company and counsel of the good. If my brother does not esteem his own blood, let him at least not despise or forsake my soul. Let him come and see me, and command me to do whatever he pleases, for I am ready to do whatever he sees fit."³³

The holy abbot, hearing of Humbeline's good reaction, was filled with compassion and sent for all the other brothers to come see her. With the firmness and gentleness proper to him, the Mellifluous Doctor reminded her of the example of her virtuous mother, persuading her that sanctity was not incompatible with marriage. And he exhorted her: "Is it possible that only you, among so many siblings, will be slave of your body, while they are concerned only with the health of their soul? So many longing for Heaven, and only you buried in the earth? So many thinking each instant

about death, and you as if you were to remain forever in the world? Will your judgement prevail, and will you alone glory in the rottenness which will serve as food for the worms, and will you live forever forgetful of the good and usefulness of your soul? What payment will you make, in the next life, for these fleeting pleasures, this momentary glory and such superfluous expenditure?"³⁴

They talked at length... Humbeline felt herself cleansed in fresh, perfumed water. She understood that true happiness can only be found in God and that all the riches of the earth could never quench her thirst for the infinite.

St. Bernard asked her: "will you alone glory in the rottenness which will serve as food for the worms, forgetful of the good of your soul?"

When the magnificent retinue left Clairvaux, Humbeline had made an important decision.

A sudden and complete change

Back at the Castle of Fontaines, Humbeline began a new life: abandoning all excesses of luxury, she began to follow a routine marked by austerities, with mortifications and long periods dedicated to prayer.

After two years, she asked her husband for permission to retire to a convent, for she clearly felt the voice of grace calling her to a life of total renunciation of all that was earthly, and of continuous holocaust in praise of God. Although they had no children yet, it was not easy for Guy to agree. Only when he had thought it over and made sure that it was God's will did he give his consent, and immediately felt a deep joy in his soul.

Having settled the matrimonial question according to the discipline of the Church, she finally entered the Benedictine convent of Jully-sur-Sarce, of which Elizabeth de Forez, her sister-in-law, was abbess.

Humbeline took great strides on the road to sanctity; demonstrating exemplary obedience, radical auster-



Meeting of St. Bernard with his sister Humbeline at the Abbey of Clairvaux, by Andreas Meinrad von Ow - Wald Monastery, Sigmaringen (Germany)

Reproduction

ity and constant humility. She performed the lowliest tasks with simplicity, wishing in this way to atone for the worldly life she had led. She spent many nights in continuous prayer, meditating on the sorrowful Passion of Our Lord.

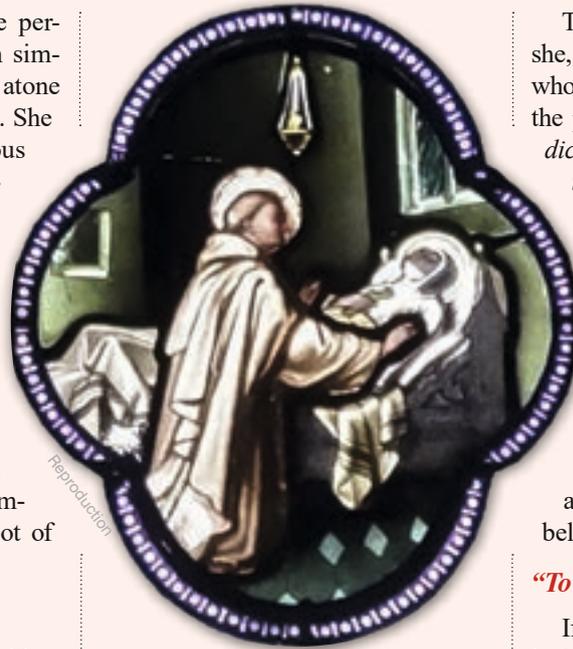
She was surprised to be unanimously elected prioress of the convent when Elizabeth was sent to direct a new house. In this office, she was so successful in transmitting the fortitude and gentleness of her Spouse, Jesus Christ, that some have called her the feminine version of the great Abbot of Clairvaux.

Joyful even in death!

The joy of the Saints is evident even in death. On reaching the age of fifty, of which sixteen years had been spent in religious life and about eleven as abbess, Humbeline felt her strength beginning to wane. On being informed of the failing health of his sister, already bedridden, St. Bernard went to Jully in the company of André and Nivard.

It was Humbeline's greatest desire to be with Bernard, and it was enough to hear his voice for her to recover her strength and begin a pleasant conversation with her three brothers. She declared how happy she was to have followed Bernard's advice, telling him: "The best life, which is that of my soul, I owe to your persuasion and doctrine; now I pray you proceed and free me, as I hope, from eternal punishment."⁵

After a brief visit, during which she appeared happy and cheerful, the brothers decided to leave her and retire to the convent hostel. A few moments later, however, an angel appeared to



St. Bernard attends the death of his sister Humbeline - Church of St. Leodegar, Gigny (France)

Humbeline made great strides on the path of holiness, adopting the motto her brother had given her: "To love is to serve"

Humbeline's confessor, who was also there, and warned him that she was about to expire. Then the floorboards began to creak without anyone touching them, and as everyone in the monastery rushed to see what was happening, the priest warned them of the abbess' imminent death.

They rushed to her bedside, and she, smiling, greeted each one of those who arrived, and then she proclaimed the psalm: "*Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi: in domum Domini ibimus*" (122:1).⁶ Her face was illuminated by a heavenly radiance. After a few moments, she fixed her gaze on Heaven and with ineffable serenity she entrusted her soul to God. It was August 21, 1141.

According to some, her body exuded a strong fragrance that consoled everyone around her, and her beautiful face belied the illness she had suffered.

"To love is to serve"

If we wish to sum up Bl. Humbeline's life in a few words, we need to look no further than the motto that she herself adopted: "To love is to serve". It is said that this phrase was sent to her by St. Bernard, written on a small parchment, in reply to a letter in which his sister complained about the number of her responsibilities, which left her almost no time for meditation.

She considered these few words as valuable as a long treatise, because they pointed out the ideal for which she lived, the reason why she should always give of herself, fighting fatigue without discouragement, feeling irritated without showing it and continuing to desire solitude without ever having a moment to herself.

As one author well expressed it, this phrase made the voice of her dear brother Bernard resound in our Saint's heart, as if constantly repeating to her: "Humbeline, our Beloved is a zealous lover who does not tolerate haggling over sacrifice. Work for Him even unto death, and do it smiling!"⁷ ✧

¹ D'HÉRICHAULT, Charles. *Les mères des Saints*. 2.ed. Paris: Gaume et C^{ie}, 1985, p.124-125.

² Idem, p.134.

³ MUÑIZ, O. Cist, Roberto. *Medula historica cisterciense*. Valladolid: Imprenta de la Viuda de D. Tomás de Santander, 1785, t.IV, p.4.

⁴ Idem, p.5.

⁵ Idem, p.8-9.

⁶ From the Latin: "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'"

⁷ RAYMOND, OCSO, M. *La familia que alcanzó a Cristo*. Barcelona: Herder, 2003, p.231.

A Ship Without a Commander?

The past offers examples of the disasters met by those who preferred to rely on their own strength rather than the help of a good general. Let us take a look at one of them, which occurred during the period of the great navigations.



Francisco Javier Ottati

It is indisputable that the discovery of the Americas deeply marked the history of humanity. Although the desired goal when the great voyages began was different from what was in fact achieved – the original goal was to cross the Atlantic Ocean to reach the Indies – this undertaking still unfolded as a feat of daring, considering the rudimentary resources of the time.

Such a challenge could only have been undertaken with the participation of brave and fearless men, willing to give themselves entirely for an ideal, even at the cost of their lives. In a word, those expeditions required heroes. However, they would

never have been successful without the presence of another factor: cohesion, a mysterious force capable of transforming disparate elements into a compact and indestructible body, provided they are engaged in the fight for a higher value.

In this sense, the history of the navigations narrates countless episodes of the triumph and glory of troops that achieved success because they recognized the need to have a leader who would unite them around an ideal and guide them.

However, the past also offers the contrary example: the disasters met by those who preferred to rely on their own strength rather than trust in vic-

tory following the orders of a general. We can benefit from considering these events, as well, in order to avoid the “shipwreck” of our vessel. Let us consider one of them, which happened a few years after the arrival of the discoverers in the Americas.

The crew of Don Alonso de Ojeda

Don Alonso de Ojeda, a military captain from Spain, a veteran of the Granada War, who had arrived in the Americas on Christopher Columbus’ second voyage, was leading a group of his countrymen on the newly discovered continent. “A temperate man, audacious, tough, of small stature, but great in courage and intelligence.”¹

In 1510, the brave captain and his warriors landed on a Caribbean beach, which was then called San Sebastian. They established a fort there, but soon found themselves beset by constant attacks from the natives, whose poisoned arrows could penetrate any armour, and by a scarcity of food. While they were trying to survive on the meagre fruits of the land, one of the lookouts spotted the arrival of a ship on the horizon.

There was general outbreak of enthusiasm. Ojeda explained to his men the plan that he himself would depart on that ship, in order to bring reinforcements and provisions. The soldiers did not hesitate to accept the



The great navigations achieved glories and triumphs because the men who undertook them recognized the need to have a leader

Representation of Christopher Columbus’ ships

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captain's proposal, for they had total confidence in his bravery and great skill.

However, it was also necessary to safeguard the new fort. The troops were to stay in San Sebastian, under the command of a tough and rather uneducated, but adventurous and enterprising war veteran by the name of Francisco Pizarro – the future conquistador of Peru. If the captain did not return in fifty days, they were to leave the settlement.

What must have been the astonishment of the hopeful Ojeda when, shortly after setting out on his voyage, he learnt that the sailors on that ship were none other than the first pirates of the New World, under the command of a certain Bernardino de Talavera.²

Navigating the Caribbean seas

Don Alonso de Ojeda did not lose heart. Taking advantage of his status as an experienced and knowledgeable officer of those seas, he immediately declared himself the sole commander of the ship. The bandits accepted at first, but after a few days in the immense desert of the American waters, being far from the fort and seeing the ease with which he manoeuvred the vessel, they thought they could do the same. They then decided to usurp the command and bind the unfortunate Spanish captain in chains, in the ship's brig.

Now, after four days of mutiny, the sailors – who knew nothing of the Caribbean seas – were scarcely able to navigate, especially when a terrible storm took them by surprise. Not knowing what to do at that tragic moment, they lowered all the sails, leaving themselves at the mercy of the storm; the ship was soon showing signs of damage... The situation inevitably led to the release of Ojeda, since he was the only one capable of saving the crew.

Having spent four nights in the darkness of the ship's hold, the captain



An authority who guides humanity towards true happiness is indispensable

Don Alonso de Ojeda, by Ignacio Castillo Cervantes - Colombian Academy of History, Bogotá

seemed to awaken from a nightmare and took command again, thus managing to reach Cuba, the nearest island. However, as they approached the beach, the crew was greatly alarmed: the boat, almost destroyed by the tremendous squall, began to break up underneath them. Luckily, they were close to the beach, and with great difficulty they managed to save themselves from the ravages of the sea.

New dangers in Cuba

Once on dry land, history repeated itself: the pirates rebelled against Ojeda and removed his weapons, thinking they could easily assume the government of the region.

This was yet another folly, the fruit of the pretentious illusions of these lawless men, which was soon deflated by the arrows of the natives after advancing only a few metres inland. In the face of this danger, the pirates decided to ask the commander for help once again, even though this put them at risk of being later punished for their crimes with the death penalty.

Ojeda had to wade into a swamp with his improvised crew. The jour-

ney lasted a week, during which they were continuously wet and plagued by myriad mosquitoes. Each day some of the men died, with only thirty-five surviving of the seventy-six who had embarked in San Sebastian.

At last they reached a village, whose peaceful chief helped them to get to Jamaica. There all the participants in the mutiny were executed by order of the viceroy.

Necessity of an authority

What happened to Don Alonso de Ojeda is very similar to what can happen in society. St. Thomas Aquinas³ states that, just as on a ship the guidance of an experienced navigator who knows how to steer the ship towards its destination is necessary, among men the presence of an authority who guides them towards the port of perfect happiness is equally indispensable.

Building a society based on self-management is a utopian goal. Can there be order and laws in a group devoid of rulers? And, without order, is it possible to get anywhere?

Perhaps it is. However, the port towards which total egalitarianism is destined is not happiness, but failure, misery... and shipwreck. ✧

¹ ESPARZA, José Javier. *La cruzada del océano. La gran aventura de la conquista de América*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2015, p.75.

² Cf. Idem, p.148. According to another version, the pirates declared themselves as such when they disembarked in San Sebastian, revealing that they had gone there in order to sell the Spaniards stolen food (cf. CARDONA CASTRO, Francisco Luis Cardona [Dir.]. *Pizarro*. Madrid: Edimat Libros, 2003, p.62-63). To believe this, one would have to admit that an experienced military man like Ojeda was foolhardy enough to embark alone on a ship of bandits.

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *On the Government of Princes*. L.I, c.1.

A Lady from Better Times

Dona Lucilia, with seriousness and firmness, rejected the so-called “modern” mentality, whose final and bitter fruits we still taste today. In her view, accepting it would mean abandoning the path of duty.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

With the end of the war in 1918, a period that would be dubbed by historians as *Entre deux Guerres*¹ began. The harmonic chords of the waltz were replaced by the strident and cacophonous sounds of jazz. The staid and solemn horse-drawn carriage gave way, once and for all, to the automobile, setting a new pace to life. Women – until then the queen of the home, took their first steps toward gender equality. In one stride, hemlines rose from the ankles to the knees, and the long and beautiful dresses of yesteryear were discarded. A march was set in motion whose endpoint – and everyone sensed it – was immodesty.

Women who had customarily worn their long hair arranged like a crown honouring their dignity sacrificed it on the altar of fashion and pragmatism. The new style was called à la *garçonne*.² *Rouge* and *bâton*, which no self-respecting woman used before, gradually overruled modest

customs. Laughter, which formerly played a discreet role in life, became the vital symbol of happiness – an idea widely spread by Hollywood films. The non-joker and those lacking the pseudo-charisma of stimulating constant hilarity were put aside at social events.

An unchecked grab for money went part and parcel with this new way of being. God, morals, thought, tradition, refinement, good taste and manners were labelled as myths belonging to the past; what mattered was the “good” life in the present.

Dona Lucilia – courteous and affable, while always serious and firm – rejected this so-called “modern” mentality, whose final and bitter fruits we still taste today. In her view, accepting it would mean abandoning the path of duty.

For her, religion was not limited to keeping the sacred precepts of the Law of God and practicing devotions with no connection to the good of the temporal order. Religion included,



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Dona Lucilia in Paris, in 1912

*For Dona Lucilia,
the practice of
Religion included
the duty to orient
her life according to
the dictates of the
Sacred Heart of Jesus*

beyond this, a vision of life in accordance with the revelations and dictates of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which should encompass all aspects of human activity. She took care to orient her everyday activities according to this vision, from household duties, to the children's upbringing, and even to her social life.

A small but touching episode clearly illustrates her resistance to the "modern" spirit.

Dona Lucilia refuses to follow the new fashion

At a luncheon one day, friends and relatives started goading Dona Lucilia to cut her hair à la *garçonne* and to use make-up, since she was the only one in their social circle that had not adopted the new style. Perhaps her quiet but unshakable faithfulness to the old customs caused a degree of moral friction with those around her.

Dona Lucilia deftly side-stepped the issue as long as she could to avoid unpleasantness with the visitors, but the conversation went on and the irksome persistence continued. When the pressure rose well above tolerable levels in what was a personal matter, she reacted, as she frequently did, with an expressive silence.

Plinio, who was then around twelve years old, was seated beside her. While he was naturally communicative and assertive, he listened quietly to this exchange, since children were not permitted to speak at the table. He, who had always been enchanted with his mother's appearance and noted how well her exterior suited the noble interior of her soul, saw her fall silent. Then and there, he decided to intervene to support her good position. Pushing his chair back, he went down on his knees before Dona Lucilia, affectionately imploring:

"Mamãe, will you promise me that as long as you live you will never cut your hair or use *bâton*?"

Touched by her son's gesture, she turned to the others with an almost playful smile and gently and affably closed the discussion:

"You see? Plinio does not want me to cut my hair, so I will not cut it..."

Silence settled over the room. Never again did relatives or friends raise the subject, for the rest of Dona Lucilia's days.

When her children saw her for the last time lying in the coffin, her venerable silver hair was untouched, and her lips, forever closed, were devoid of lipstick. Even in death she was faithful to the request that her son had so earnestly made to her on his knees when still a boy.

Streetcars serve as a pretext for shortening dresses

Dona Lucilia noted the first sign of moral decadence with regard to feminine attire following closely upon the generalized use of electric streetcars as the main means of urban transportation.

She had witnessed the inauguration of the first tram-line in São Paulo in 1900. Years later, she described to her children how the public euphoria at being able to ride in vehicles powered by electricity – with free passes, moreover, on the first day – was so great that some people even rode on top of the cars.

This euphoria triggered an important and grave change in women's fashions. Dona Lucilia explained that ladies' ankle-length dresses could hamper their exit from the streetcars, causing them to trip on the steps. For this and other reasons, dresses became shorter over the years until they reached the knees. Dona Lucilia saw each shortening as a danger signal.

The "cattle stampede"

Who can stroll through the Coliseum in Rome without being taken by a feeling of respect and veneration for the thousands of martyrs who were

devoured there by beasts for refusing to burn incense to idols?

If subtler, no less admirable is the heroism of one who resolves to uphold all the principles taught by the Holy Church in a society that has turned its back to the truth and the good. Millions of people, dreading the thought of being rejected by those around them, ca-



Reproduction

Plinio around the year 1920

Following the entire conversation, Plinio, around twelve years old, decided to intervene to support his mother's good position

pitulate under this pressure and spiritually perish.

When she came up against Hollywood's overbearing influence, Dona Lucilia remained serenely opposed to everything that clashed with her Catholic convictions.

Years later she would relate – discreetly but with total disapproval – a scandal that surfaced in São Paulo at this time, involving two families in the social limelight for their affluence.

A certain man left his wife and went to live with a woman who had abandoned her husband, and the two took up a lifestyle of double adultery. To confer an appearance of legitimacy to their corrupt conduct, they travelled to Uruguay and returned saying that they had contracted a civil marriage there.

Friends and acquaintances heard the woman claim that their union was really a “marriage,” which amounted to equating concubinage with matrimony. With an expression revealing her censure of this statement, Dona Lucilia added that those days still bore traces of morality, which explains why this situation met with general disapproval.

The story continued. One day, a relative of Dona Lucilia's was shopping at Casa Mappin – a store which

carried only the finest merchandise, making it a favourite among high society – when she witnessed a shocking scene. Hearing a sudden commotion, she turned around and saw two women physically attacking each other with blows and kicks, and she realized that it was the legitimate wife and the above-mentioned concubine.

Since she was known to both parties, she hastily left the shop, to avoid becoming involved in the shameful brawl. At lunch at the Ribeiro dos Santos' house that day, she gave an account of what she had seen, sparking a barrage of commentary at the table. Dona Lucilia listened to everything in silence. However, when it was remarked that concubinage was

As the new mentality gained ground, those who remained faithful to tradition were gradually being set aside

unacceptable but that wives should be more tolerant of their husbands' misconduct, Dona Lucilia sighed deeply and said:

“Tolerance, tolerance! I wouldn't count on much of it... Men have carried their deceit to the point where their wives can no longer abide it. And now, besides their husbands' deplorable conduct, immoral movies and literature are making them just as bad. This episode shows that the cattle stampede is just beginning...”

This pithy observation – an astute prediction – was met by laughter by some, not because they thought what she said was ridiculous but because they found the expression “cattle stampede” comical. They failed to grasp the thought in its depth, but future decades would confirm it. Today, divorce is widespread, as is concubinage; in truth, the “cattle” have stamped.

Unpretentiousness, serenity, and perfection

Utterly self-assured, Dona Lucilia rose above the frenzy, anxiety and competitive spirit of her time, unlike most women and girls who fell under the influence of the Hollywood spirit.

The vestiges of pomp in social life, however, still demanded elegant for-

Photos: Reproduction



At left: Ladies of the São Paulo aristocracy attending a party in the time of Plinio's childhood; at right, American soldiers photographed during a Thanksgiving dinner, in 1918

mal attire at balls, usually inspired by French fashions. Upper-class ladies subscribed to Parisian magazines with illustrations of the latest and finest in feminine attire. What colour should the silk of a gown be to set off a certain coiffure? What was the best combination of hat, shoes, and purse? What jewels were most appropriate for a given dress? Everything was meticulously weighed, considered and discussed, with an eye to the next social event.

Many women had their wardrobes furnished at a large specialty store, *La Saison*, beautifully decorated according to French taste. The proprietor, Madame Françoise – according to the Brazilian rendering, Dona Francisquinha – or her assistants usually went to the client’s homes, for fabric selection, measuring and fitting sessions.

Dona Lucilia followed this social norm like the others, designing her dresses, selecting fabrics and overseeing her dressmakers’ work. She also took lively part in the conversations about such things, while never yielding to the agitation that this topic tended to elicit.

On the day of a party, most ladies waited with bated breath for the event to begin. Dona Lucilia had prepared herself as impeccably as they. Sure of her good taste, but with utter unpretentiousness, she maintained her customary poise and serenity.

She was a bastion of traditional *Paulista* composure, in a world that



Dona Lucilia a month before her death, at ninety-one years of age

Dona Lucilia remained a bastion of traditional “Paulista” composure, in a world that was succumbing to the turmoil of modern life

was succumbing to the turmoil of modern life.

Fidelity, even at the price of isolation

Dona Lucilia’s admirable consistency exacted the heavy toll of isolation which she bore with the firm resignation of a Catholic soul.

As the new mentality gained ground, those who were faithful to the traditions and manners of the past were gradually set aside, sentenced to the harsh penalty of ostracism. Their conversation, once viewed as enjoyable, was now thought uninteresting. Their ceremonious bearing was at odds with the modern way; only the funny, the exciting, and the spontaneous had a right to exist.

It was when the winds of change were at their strongest that Dona Lucilia saw her children reach adolescence –

that pivotal phase in a person’s life in which all can be gained or lost. Rosée, now twelve, still had the advantage of being educated at home. But as for Plinio, the day was inevitably approaching when he would have to attend school. Buttressed by a privileged formation, he must now wage the battle against human respect. Heavenly aid would not be lacking, nor would the fervent prayers of his mother.

But how many apprehensions assailed Dona Lucilia’s heart! ✧

Taken, with slight adaptations, from: *Dona Lucilia*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, p.226-231

¹ The period between the First and the Second World Wars.

² French expression that equates to “In a boyish style”.



Photos: Eric Salas



Spain – As has become tradition, Herald members and co-operators from various Spanish cities gathered on December 18 in Zaragoza to express with a Mass and floral offering their thanks to the Virgin of the Pillar for the maternal protection She has shown them throughout the year.

Photos: Mathias Alvarez



Paraguay – On November 21, a solemn ceremony of consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary was carried out in the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, in Ypacaraí (left). And, over the course of Advent, concerts highlighting the true meaning of Christmas were held in public settings like the Paseo de la Galeria Shopping Centre (right).

David Badoya



Alejandro Quirola

Colombia – Members of the Law Enforcement School participated in a Eucharist celebrated at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, in Tocancipá (left). In the same municipality, over four hundred employees of a well-known flower producer were present for the visit of the Pilgrim Statue and accompanied her tour of the facility (right).



Photos: Edito Agostinho Mapanga

Mozambique – More than 150 members of the faithful from St. Joseph’s Community in Matola received the Sacrament of Confirmation on December 18 and 19, during ceremonies presided over by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Piergiorgio Bertoldi (left), and by the Archbishop of Maputo, Francisco Chimoio, OFMCap (centre and right).



Photos: Nuno Moura

Portugal – On December 4 and 5, Eucharistic Celebrations were held in honour of the Child Jesus in the Churches of St. James, in Bragança (left), and of St. Francis, in Guimarães (centre and right). The first was presided over by the Most Rev. José Manuel Garcia Cordeiro (left), who has recently been appointed Archbishop.

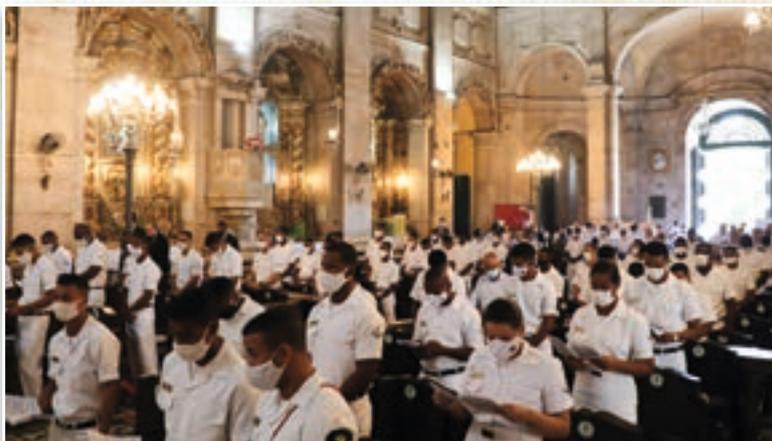


Photos: Juan Carlos Villagómez

Mexico – On the occasion of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, approximately a hundred people consecrated themselves to Mary in the Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in Zacamulpa (left). A few days later, another group renewed their consecration during a solemn Eucharistic Adoration held in the metropolitan cathedral (right).



Brasília – Students from the Heralds of the Gospel School in Cotia (SP) travelled to the country’s capital to participate in the Christmas cantata organized by the President of Brazil at his residence, the Alvorada Palace (left), and to solemnize the Christmas Mass celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Giambattista Diquattro, at the Supreme Court of Justice (right).



Salvador – To commemorate the Brazilian Seafarers’ Day, the command of the 2nd Naval District of the Brazilian Navy organized the celebration of a Holy Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception on the Coast. The celebrant was Auxiliary Bishop of Salvador Dorival Souza Barreto Júnior, and members of the Heralds of the Gospel assisted in the ceremony.



Cuiabá – The Mass and ceremony in honour of Our Lady of Fatima held on December 4 in the metropolitan cathedral of the western Brazilian city of Cuiabá, on the occasion of the First Saturday Communion of reparation (left), were followed by a well-attended choral presentation in honour of the Infant Jesus (right).

Photos: Reproduction

Photos: Felipe Cedraz

Photos: João Paulo Rodrigues



Photos: João Paulo Rodrigues

Brazil – During the holidays, students from the Heralds of the Gospel School in Mairiporã (SP) paid tribute to the Divine Infant with musical performances in cities of Paraná, Santa Catarina, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In the photos, concerts held at the Heralds’ House in Joinville (left), and at the Cathedral of Itapetininga, in the State of São Paulo (right).



Leandro Souza

Fortaleza – On November 27, one hundred and eighty people consecrated themselves to Jesus through Mary, during a solemn Mass in the metropolitan cathedral of this port city, celebrated by Father Lourenço Ferronato, EP. The preparatory course, lasting several weeks, consisted of both online and in-person classes.



Antônio José Aki



Mariana Quimas

Nova Friburgo (Rio de Janeiro State) – Among the numerous activities carried out in December by the female sector of the Heralds in this city, special highpoints were the Christmas cantata held on Governador Portela Square, in Duas Barras (left), and the visit to the Elderly Care Centre in Cordeiro, carrying a statue of the Child Jesus (right).



More than a thousand anti-religious acts in France in 2021

According to France's Minister of the Interior, Gérald Darmanin, from January to October 2021 approximately one thousand four hundred anti-religious acts were registered in this country, ranging from insults to vandalism. Although this represents a decline as compared with 2019, the numbers are still high, especially in relation to Christianity, which was the object of 686 of the attacks.

And the violence continues. On December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, some faithful who were taking part in a procession between two churches in the city of Nanterre were verbally assaulted and threatened by a group of people. The Minister of the Interior has recommended that the diocese denounce this, stating that death threats are completely unacceptable.



Statue of the Blessed Virgin left intact in tornado's wake

While the world has been struck by numerous natural disasters in recent months, the Blessed Virgin seems to have wanted to manifest her protective action in many of them, symbolized by images that remain

intact after the occurrence of some cataclysm.

This is what recently occurred with a statue of Our Lady with the Child Jesus in her arms, located in front of Resurrection Parish in the city of Dawson Springs, Kentucky in the United States. The church was destroyed by a tornado that tore through the region, but the statue remained standing, suffering only minor damage.

Between December 10 and 11, 2021, seventy tornadoes struck ten US States, Kentucky suffering the highest tolls. In that state alone, there were seventy-five deaths, 126 persons injured, and widespread destruction involving thousands of buildings.

Synagogue from the time of Christ discovered in Magdala

In 2009 the ruins of a synagogue dating from the time of Jesus were found in the lands of St. Mary Magdalene. In December 2021, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of another synagogue only one hundred and sixty metres from the previous one, dating from the same period. Both seem to have suffered the effects of war, especially on the occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD.

The city of Magdala was located at the foot of Mount Arbel, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the natural path from Nazareth to Capernaum, which, based on biblical accounts, supports the belief that Jesus visited these synagogues with His disciples.

Roman-era ring with effigy of the Good Shepherd found

The figure of the Good Shepherd, one of the most ancient artistic representations of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is often associated with the Roman catacombs of the early Christian era. Now, however, it has turned up in a treasure trove found by divers from the Israel Antiquities Authority off Israel's Mediterranean coast. The dis-

covery is from two shipwrecks that occurred near the ancient port of Caesarea, one of them in the third century.

Among the objects retrieved from the sea was a large Roman-era gold ring of an octagonal shape, set with a green gemstone. On the stone is carved a depiction of a young shepherd carrying a sheep on his shoulders, typical features of the aforementioned representation of the Redeemer. The Israel Antiquities Authority considers the figure to be a symbol of salvation, and a testimony to faith in Jesus Christ. The numismatic department of the institution also stated that this is an exceptional find, which reveals the growth of Christianity in the third century.



Reproduction

Odetinha is declared Venerable

In November, the heroic virtues of Odette Vidal Cardoso – affectionately known as *Odetinha* – were recognized. She now receives the title of Venerable, thus advancing one step further in her process of canonization. *Odetinha* could become the first Cariocan Saint.

Born on September 15, 1930, in Rio de Janeiro, she was a lily of innocence and died at the age of nine, on November 25, 1939, of paratyphoid. From the age of four she had intimate conversations with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, for whom she had great devotion. She made her First Holy Communion on August 15, 1937, at the age of seven.

The process of beatification of *Odetinha* was initiated in January 2013 and since then the remains of the girl have been exposed for public devotion in the Basilica of the Immacu-



Biography of Benedict XVI Now Published in Portuguese

At the beginning of December, the Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation in Rome presented the biography of the Pope Emeritus written by Peter Seewald, in Italian: *Benedetto XVI. Una vita.*

A few days later, on December 12, Benedict XVI received

from the hands of Monsignor Antonio Luiz Catelan Ferreira, recently appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, member of the International Theological Commission and secretary of the Ratzinger Society of Brazil, an edition of the biography in Portuguese. The work was originally published in Germany in 2020.

late Conception in the capital of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

Catholic catechist murdered in Mozambique

On December 15, while walking with his wife and children to an agricultural field in the Cabo Delgado region of northern Mozambique, Matias Buscam, a Catholic catechist, was approached by Muslim terrorists, who cruelly beheaded him. The murderers then forced his wife to carry his head, in order to present it to the authorities with this message: "We are still here."

The Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Pemba, Bishop Antonio Juliasso Ferreira Sandramo, has expressed great concern over the in-

crease in terrorist attacks in his jurisdiction, saying there is a lot of insecurity despite the presence of foreign military in the region. Since October 2017, over three thousand people have been killed in armed attacks.

Scholars try to recreate sound of the medieval bells of the Basilica of the Nativity

The melodious tones that rang out almost eight hundred years ago in the place where Our Lord Jesus Christ was born could resound again in our days. This is the hope of researchers from European universities who are studying the medieval bells of the Basilica of the Nativity, with a view to casting functional copies.

David Catalunya, a researcher at the Universities of Oxford and Würzburg and director of the project, explains that in the 13th century, just prior to the Muslim occupation of the Holy Land, the crusaders who were in the city of Bethlehem buried the thirteen bronze bells of the church to save them from destruction.

According to Fr. Stephane, liturgist of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, the bells were discovered at the beginning of the 20th century, along with 222 copper pipes from the medieval organ of the church of Bethlehem, during restoration work on the edifice. The bells formed part of a carillon that accompanied the songs of the faithful during the celebrations held there.

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Where Will I Live?

Standing sorrowfully before the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Manuel unburdened his soul. Nothing in his life had ever worked out... Burying his face in his hands, he wept bitterly, until he felt a hand touch his shoulder.



Lorena Mello

Once upon a time there lived a poor and simple man called Manuel. He wandered about restlessly, looking forlorn. Why was he so troubled? The poor fellow had nowhere to live, and he longed for a place to call his home.

The big problem was his lack of means, for there wasn't a penny in his ragged and threadbare pocket. If he wanted a solution, he would need to find some kind of work. And that is what he decided to do.

Making his way through the streets, he stopped in front of a splendid mansion and thought: "With such

a big place, they may need some help with the upkeep."

Knock-knock-knock!

"Who is it?" asked the doorman.

"I would like to work at this house," Manuel replied.

"Hmm... Wait here while I call the housekeeper."

After a few minutes, an impeccably-dressed lady appeared. She looked curiously at Manuel, anxious to know what he wanted.

"Can I help you?"

He told her of his dire necessity, and she replied kindly:

"I understand what a difficult situation you are in. We are already fully-

staffed, but I will accept your services as long as the butler can assign you some task."

The lady invited him in and introduced him to the butler. The latter, however, accustomed to being treated with the highest respect, could not bear to see such a shabby fellow being treated so politely. Disguising his malice, he replied:

"Ma'am, it happens that all our posts are filled. However, I know of a very good household that is in need of help."

He jotted down an address on a piece of paper and handed it to the visitor. The housekeeper, visibly relieved, wished Manuel good luck and let him continue on his way. The information on the paper, however, was false; it led him out of town, down a long, deserted street with nothing but overgrown plots of land... Manuel understood the butler's trick and decided not to return to the mansion.

And so he set out once again, in search of another opportunity.

As he walked along, he came upon a horse stable, with a "Help Needed" sign hanging out on the front gate. Manuel presented himself and was accepted. His duty would be to clean the horses' stalls, feed them, and watch over them during their daily exercise. There was a small hut close



Illustrations: Giuliana D'Amaro

Early in the morning, everything seemed to be going well; but when he released the horses, they all fled

to the stable, which would serve as his living quarters.

Early the next morning, he started his cleaning duty, and he seemed to be doing a fine job. However, when he released the horses, they all fled as if in a stampede. The front gate of the horse farm had been left open and most of them charged through it. It took seven hours of tremendous effort to retrieve the horses and gather them back into the stable. The owner, furious, fired Manuel without paying him a single cent.

And so he set out once again, in search of another opportunity.

He arrived at the shop of a successful artist who painted exquisite landscapes to order. Since he had many clients, he worked every day until late at night, and he needed someone to act as a general helping hand and to deliver the finished goods to his buyers.

The poor man offered his services, and the artist gladly accepted, giving his assistant a place to stay under his own roof, and welcoming him at his own table. Manuel was to be at hand at all times to render any necessary service.

However, by the end of the first month, customer complaints had become incessant: the paintings they had received were not the ones they had ordered. Tired by the long hours, Manuel had mixed up the most of the deliveries, causing a terrible confusion.

The painter felt sorry for the unfortunate man, but knowing he could not afford to place his business at risk, he told Manuel that he would have to go.

And so he set out once again, in search of another opportunity.

This time, Manuel decided to implore heavenly assistance. He was

truly a humble man and had hope in divine intervention. As he walked and prayed, he came upon a monastery. An idea occurred to him: "Why don't I become a monk?"

He knocked on the door, and was soon telling the abbot all his woes. The good monk felt compassion for Manuel. He could not accept someone without a clear vocation, but to help him, he agreed to let him stay at the monastery for a while.

He asked one of the friars to instruct him on the daily life of the community. But Manuel was unable to adapt to the silence, the schedule, or the monastic discipline. He spoke even during the most sacred moments of recollection. One day, fascinated by the bells, he began to pull the cord that set the carillon in motion, bringing all the monks running...

After this and similar escapades, the abbot had no choice but to send him away from the monastery. Before the unfortunate man left, he gave him a blessing, which Manuel received amid sobs, and said to him in a fatherly tone:

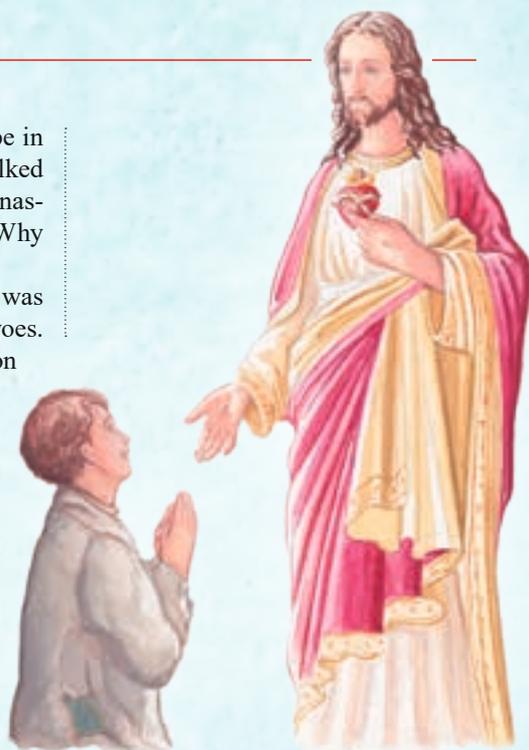
"My son, go to the church and pray before the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I am sure that He will help you!"

Manuel took his advice, and standing before the statue, he unburdened his soul:

"My good Saviour, see how miserable I am! I'm not fit for anything at all.

I only make terrible mistakes everywhere I go, and that's why everyone rejects me. I have no home, no means to live. Will You abandon me too? Please help me, Lord; I have nowhere else to turn."

Burying his face in his hands, Manuel wept bitterly. After a long time, he



"Manuel, my child, dry your tears. All of this happened so that I could grant you an immense grace"

felt a hand touch his shoulder and he looked up at the statue; it had come to life!

Overflowing with goodness, Jesus said to him:

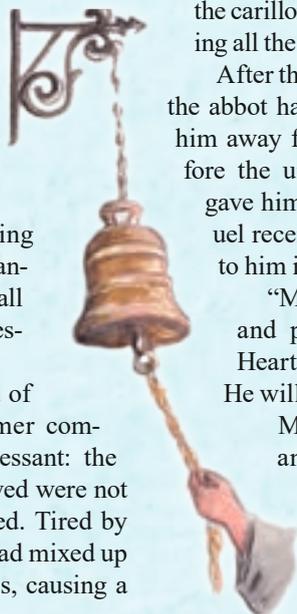
"Manuel, my child, dry your tears. All of this happened so that I could grant you an immense grace. Do you see my right hand? It calls you. Now look at my left hand: it points to my Heart. The anguish you have suffered and the trust you have placed in Me have moved my love to grant you a place in this divine sanctuary. Do you want to live here always?"

"Yes, Lord! It will be my home forever!"

"Then come, my child!"

And, extending His right hand, the Divine Saviour took Manuel and placed him inside his Sacred Heart.

God allows us to experience tribulations, but always with a view to a greater good. Let us never stop trusting in the goodness of Jesus! In the end we will receive much more than we may have lost. ✧



THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY



Francisco Lecaros

**The Presentation of Our Lord -
National Art Museum of Catalonia,
Barcelona**

- 1. St. Sigebert III**, king (†656). Son of the Merovingian King Dagobert I; he built the monasteries of Cugnon, Stavelot-Malmédy and St. Martin near Metz. A generous protector of the poor. He died in Metz, France, at age twenty-six.
- 2. Feast of the Presentation of the Lord.**
St. Catherine de Ricci, virgin (†1590). Dominican religious who mystically experienced the Passion of Christ and received the stigmata. A correspondent of St. Philip Neri, St. Charles Borromeo and St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi.
- 3. St. Blaise**, bishop and martyr (†c. 320 Sebaste – present-day Turkey).
St. Ansgar, bishop (†865 Bremen - Germany).

St. Werburgh, abbess (†c. 700). Anglo-Saxon princess who entered the Abbey of Ely and became its abbess, later founding several other monasteries.

- 4. St. Nicholas Studites**, monk (†868). Abbot of the Studios Monastery in Constantinople, today Istanbul, Turkey. He was exiled repeatedly for defending the cult to images.
- 5. St. Agatha**, virgin and martyr (†c. 251 Catania - Italy).
St. Saba the Younger, monk (†995). He tirelessly propagated monastic life in the regions of Calabria and Lucania, Italy, with his brother, St. Macarius.

6. 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

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

St. Vaast, bishop (†c. 540). Sent by St. Remigius, Bishop of Rheims, to Arras, France, he catechized king Clovis, and re-established and directed the local church for nearly forty years.

- 7. Blessed Rosalie Rendu**, virgin (†1856). Religious of the Daughters of Charity, she worked in the poorest suburb of Paris, visiting the homes of the needy and exhorting many wealthy youths to the practice of charity.
- 8. St. Jerome Emiliani**, priest (†1537 Somasca - Italy).
St. Josephine Bakhita, virgin (†1947 Schio - Italy).
St. Cointha, martyr (†249). During the persecution of the Emperor Decius in Alexandria, Egypt, she refused to offer incense to the gods. She was tied to a horse and dragged through

the streets before being stoned to death.

- 9. St. Maro**, hermit (†c. 423). Hermit dedicated to prayer and harsh penances on a hill near present-day Aleppo, Syria. Near his sepulchre a famous monastery was erected, in which the Maronite Christian community later formed.
- 10. St. Scholastica**, virgin (†c. 547 Monte Cassino - Italy).
Blessed Aloysius Stepinac, bishop (†1960). After a long imprisonment for his fidelity to the Church, he died as a consequence of the privations and illness in Krašić, Croatia.
- 11. Our Lady of Lourdes.**
St. Soteris, virgin and martyr (†c. 304). Relative of St. Ambrose, she preferred her Faith to the privileges of nobility and human honours. Refusing to obey the order to sacrifice to idols, she was tortured and beheaded.
- 12. St. Ludan**, pilgrim (†1202). Native of Scotland, son of Prince Itiboldo, he dedicated himself to service of the sick and built hospitals and orphanages. He died in Northheim, Germany while on pilgrimage to the basilicas of the Apostles.
- 13. 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time.**
Blessed Eustochium Bellini, virgin (†1469). Religious from the Benedictine Order in Padua, who by divine permission was tormented by the devil until the end of her life.
- 14. St. Cyril**, monk (†869 Rome), **and St. Methodius**, bishop (†885 Velehrad – Czech Republic).

St. Antoninus, abbot (†c. 830). Monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino. When it was destroyed by the Lombards, he withdrew to a solitary life near Sorrento.

15. Sts. Faustinus and Jovita, martyrs (†date unknown). Brothers born to a noble family of Bresica, Italy. They received the palm of martyrdom under Emperor Hadrian.

16. Blessed Philippa Mareri, virgin (†1236). Of noble origin, she abandoned the pomp and riches of the world and went to live on a family property in Borgo San Pietro, Italy, following the model of life of St. Clare.

17. Seven Holy Founders of the Servites (†c. 1262-1310 Monte Senario, near Florence - Italy).

St. Peter Yu Chŏng-nyul, martyr (†1866). Head of a family, arrested while reading the Gospel to the faithful in the house of a catechist. He was scourged to death in Pyongyang, in present-day North Korea.

18. St. Theotonius, priest (†c. 1162). After two pilgrimages to the Holy Land, he founded the Congregation of the Canons Regular of the Holy Cross in Coimbra, Portugal.

19. Blessed Conrad Confalonieri, layman (†1351). Italian noble immersed in the pleasures of life until one day, during a hunt, he ordered a wooded area to be set on fire, resulting in a boy's death. Deeply shaken, he converted. His wife became a Clarist nun and he became a Franciscan tertiary.

20. 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Serapion, martyr (†c. 248). He endured cruel tortures and was subsequently thrown from the top of his own house in Alexandria, Egypt.

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

St. Germanus, abbot (†c. 667). He was assassinated by a group of bandits at the monastery of Grandval, Switzerland.

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

St. Margaret of Cortona, penitent (†1297). Shocked by the tragic death of the nobleman with whom she had a sinful relationship, she repented of the life she was leading and, after many trials, was admitted to the Franciscan Third Order.

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

St. Milburga, virgin (†c. 722). Daughter of King Merewalh of Mercia in present-day England. She abandoned worldly riches, embraced religious life and founded the monastery of Wenlock, and became its abbess.

24. Blessed Marco de' Marconi, hermit (†1510). Religious from the Order of the Hermits of St. Jerome in Mantua, Italy, he led a life of study, prayer and mortifications.

25. Blessed Sebastian of Aparicio, religious (†1600). Born in Spain, he emigrated to Mexico, where he amassed a great fortune. He abandoned everything to enter the Order of Friar Minors, in which he lived to almost a hundred years of age.



Francisco Lecaros

St. Blaise - Museum of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary, Calatayud (Spain)

26. St. Paula of St. Joseph Calasanz, virgin (†1889). Foundress of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary of the Pious Schools in Figueras, Spain. She adopted the motto: piety and learning.

27. 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Gregory of Narek, monk and Doctor of the Church (†c. 1005). Evangelizer of the Armenians; he was renowned for his doctrine, writings and mystical knowledge.

28. Sts. Marana and Cyra, virgins (†fifth century). They lived in silence in a small enclosure in a deserted region outlying Beroea, Syria, in harsh conditions and receiving their food through a window.



While the King Sleeps...

Vigilance is a characteristic note of the lioness' protective and maternal instinct, which makes her as fierce in defence as in attack. However, in everything she shows herself subject to the king of the jungle, putting her abilities at the service of the pride.



Sr. Adriana María Sánchez, EP

In the savannahs of faraway Africa, there is a lord more powerful than the lion: silence. In the midst of the struggles for animal survival, it reigns not as a tyrant, but gently, providing the ideal environment for the most intrepid undertakings.

In this mysterious and perilous setting, many incorrectly ascribe the sovereignty that the lion species enjoys over others solely to the king of the jungle, who, with his mane and robust physique, imposes reverential awe on all who approach him. Few, however, recognize the value of a discreet and silent heroine...

And yet the lionesses shoulder the greatest responsibilities in the pride. To them falls the task of deciding on the admission of new lions to the group, carefully guarding the "tradition" of the lineage and preventing the infiltration of undesirable elements. Endowed with a strong family

instinct, the care of the offspring is their concern, and in the discharge of this duty, the lionesses of the same group rely on strong mutual support, in order not to lose the control they exert. They also have a sense of property, and will not allow intrusions into their territory.

Finally, it is up to them to obtain the daily food. Vigilance is one of the characteristic notes of their protective and maternal instinct, which makes them as fierce in defence as in attack.

Before going out to hunt, they leave their cubs in the care of younger lionesses not yet fit for the rigours of the chase. While some act as sentinels, on the lookout for danger and ready to lend whatever service is necessary, two close in on the prey to attack it at the right moment. Everything is measured and calculated, with a perfection proper to their almost inerrant animal instinct, less impaired by the

effects of original sin than human instincts. With assurance and precision, they spring on their prey and kill it, without flinching. Then, their objective successfully and dutifully accomplished, they drag the carcass back to their territory.

Nevertheless, in everything the lioness show herself to be a true servant, putting her abilities at the service of the king of the jungle, without vying for first place. Having worked hard on the hunt, it would seem that she has every right over the prey, and might begin straightaway to feed at will. However, the lioness does not impose herself. Aware of her role, she hunts disinterestedly and eats nothing of her "conquest" until the lion has satisfied his appetite and withdrawn.

St. Bonaventure says that nature is like a book through which we can reach God because, having been created by Him, it necessarily reflects

Him and His own. Thus, we can compare the lioness to the “virtuous woman” (Sir 26:2), that is, the authentically Catholic lady so highly praised in Scripture.

Everyone is aware that “from a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die” (Sir 25:24), since Eve ate the forbidden fruit in earthly Paradise. However, it was through a Woman – Mary Most Holy – that Our Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate to bring salvation to men. Destined to crush the head of the Serpent eternally (cf. Gn 3:15), Our Lady became the model for all those who wish to follow the path of virtue, particularly when invoked as *Acies Ordinata*: “terrible as an army set in array” (Cant. 6:9).

Those who think that only men must fight are mistaken, for in order to overcome the obstacles that we all encounter in this vale of tears, it is indispensable that men and women strive together and with courageous souls. History testifies to the heroism of women who stood up against the evil of their times, sometimes prefiguring the Blessed Virgin and at other times imitating Her. In the Old Testament, the Jewish people were

liberated more than once from their enemies by the hands of a woman, such as Judith, Deborah and Jael; in more recent times we find many examples of women who were true warriors because they were Catholic, and vice versa, such as St. Joan of Arc or St. Teresa of Jesus.

From the beginning, God created woman to be the “helper fit for” (cf. Gn 2:20) man. And St. Paul revealed the sublime meaning hidden in this role: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body, and is Himself its Saviour” (Eph 5:22-23).

The virtuous woman, whose value surpasses that of pearls, not only “works with willing hands” (Prv 31:13) and “opens her hand to the poor” (Prv 31:20), but also “girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong” (Prv 31:17), as the Book of Proverbs exalts. Thus, when it is a question of defending the principles of the Faith, it is fitting for a Catholic woman to show strength, determination and steadfastness, like the lioness, who does not hesitate when she should strike! ✧



1

Derek Keats (CC by-sa 2.0)



2

Diamond Glacier Adventures (CC by-sa 2.0)



3

Robin Alasdair/Frederick Hutton (CC by-sa 2.0)



4

Bernard DUPONT (CC by-sa 2.0)

On this page:
 1. Lionesses with their cubs, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (Africa);
 2. A lioness attacking an African buffalo, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania;
 3. Lionesses on the lookout;
 4. A lion pair, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (Africa).
 On previous page:
 Lioness in West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley (England)



Our Lady of Good Success -
St. Peter House, Mairiporã
(Brazil)

Mary of Good Success is Queen in the true sense of the word. She has majesty and, at the same time, goodness. She is a warrior and a victor. Her countenance reflects the certainty of victory.

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira