

HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

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*Divine Victory,
of Radiant Grandeur*



May Whoever Looks at Me See You

Although she was a model in everything – writes a sister who had been a novice together with Maria Teresa González-Quevedo – I believe that the predominant note of her life was her devotion to Our Lady. She loved Her passionately, talked about Her at every recreation, found in Her the solution for all difficulties, the remedy for all ills, but above all, her path to holiness.

Even in her relationship with the Divine Son, she wanted Him through His Mother, according to this segment copied [...] from her notebook: “Never see Jesus without seeing the Blessed Virgin by His side; do not seek Jesus except through the Virgin; do not invoke Jesus except together with the Virgin.”

It was noticeable that, as this idea became more deeply rooted in her soul, she obtained her desired ideal. Many witness-

es of her life, testifying separately, recognize that Maria Teresa really had something in her facial expression, in her bearing, in her conversation – in short, in her whole person – which was reminiscent of the Blessed Virgin and brought Her to mind. I relate some of the numerous testimonies that confirm this:

“She had a great love for the Blessed Virgin, whom she imitated as a result; and this imitation was so effective that she fulfilled the wish expressed in the ejacula-

tion that she used to pray: ‘My Mother, may whoever looks at me see You.’ And in fact, whenever we saw her we felt that our Blessed Mother would have behaved in the same way.”

LÓPEZ DE URALDE Y ELORZA, María Luisa, CACh. “Teresita”. 6^a. ed. Madrid: Vedral, 1978, pp. 176-177.



Venerable Maria Teresa González-Quevedo y Cadarso wearing the novice habit of the Carmelites Sisters of Charity

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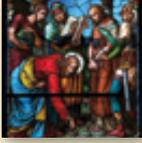
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OUR READERS WRITE



GIVING SOME MEANING TO AN UNBEARABLE SUFFERING

This message is for Sister Patrícia Victoria Villegas, EP, who wrote a beautiful article on Louis XVII. I had just stumbled across his story, and I was absolutely heartbroken and devastated for that little boy who lived two hundred and fifty years ago. Sister Patrícia's article brought me comfort and gave his needless and unbearable suffering some meaning. Thank you.

*Deborah Cher
New York – United States*

"THE SIN OF THE CENTURY"

Reading the text of St. John Paul II, in the section *The Voice of the Popes*, on *The Sin of the Century*, I think that from 1897 until today, 2022, this decadence has not slowed down. Instead, it has worsened to the point that sin is now exalted. This abyss could have been avoided if only pastors had preached well. Their responsibility is immense, not only before the faithful but especially before God.

*Adele Ares
Via rivistacattolica.it*

IT IS WONDERFUL TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S INTERCESSION

The Reward for Having Faith... And I would also add: confidence, hope, perseverance and much humility. The testimonies that the author of this article offers are from people who, afflicted by serious problems and already pushed to the limit of the imaginable, decide to appeal to Dona Lucilia's intercession. And with great faith, confidence and per-

severance, they succeeded in having their prayers heard and granted.

It is wonderful to see how Our Lord, through intercessors, attends to those who, with the virtues mentioned above, along with a great deal of humility, receive the graces they implore for with all their hearts.

*Covadonga Moutas
Via rivistacattolica.org*

ENLIGHTENING AND INSTRUCTIVE READING FOR THE PRESENT DAY

Congratulations to the author Ângelo Francisco Neto Martins and the Heralds of the Gospel for publishing this excellent article: *Some Sophisms of the Contemporary World – I let the reader choose the title of this article*, in last February's issue. There is such a need in the present day for such enlightening and formative reading. Once again, I congratulate the author on the theme chosen.

*Iria Rita Copatti Canton
Marília – Brazil*

BEWARE OF PHARISAISM...

"What fascinating scope for speculation these questions offer," concludes the author of the article *The Pharisees of the Past...* I anxiously await a continuation in a future issue. What we cannot do is stand idly by while the "Antiochuses" and the "Pharisees" unite to disfigure the Catholic Church. Peace and blessings!

*Vitor C.
Via revista.arautos.org*

A STORY THAT PROMPTS US TO REFLECT AND BE GRATEFUL

Owe Nothing to Anyone... What a beautiful story! It prompts us to reflect on the year that passed and remember all those who were at our side, whether family or friends, as well as to gratefully remember the Holy Church, the priests who ded-

icate their lives to save our souls, and the apostolate that the brothers and sisters have carried out with us throughout the year, always with a smile. There are so many graces received in Heralds' houses that we have made the resolution, whenever we arrive at one of their houses, to admire everything as if for the first time, remembering the springtime graces received on that first visit.

*Alessandra Roberta
Fernandes Corrêa
Via revista.arautos.org*

PHOTO REQUEST FOR MASS BOOKLET

I request your permission to reproduce the image of Jesus preaching in the Synagogue in Jerusalem which illustrates the *Gospel Commentary* entitled *The Power of the Word!* We are a community of Catholic religious women living in Baltimore, United States, and we wanted to publish it in the Sunday Mass booklet. Seventy-five to eighty people attend this Eucharist in person, and it is broadcast online to about one hundred to one hundred and twenty-five people. Thank you so very much.

*Sr. Luísa Santa Cruz, OCD
Via catholicmagazine.news*

ST. PIUS X PARISH SHRINE

I would like to know if it is possible for you to send us the photo of St. Pius X that you used on the cover of one of the issues of *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine. The pastor of the Adoration Shrine that bears the name of St. Pius X, here in São Carlos, saw this photo in the magazine and would like to place it on the altar of that Shrine. Would it be possible to do this kindness? May Our Lady repay you abundantly!

*Rafael Martins
São Carlos – Brazil*

GOD IS VICTORY!

Theology has ascribed innumerable attributes to God, such as Supreme Goodness, Supreme Truth and Supreme Beauty. According to the classical doctrine of participation, all created beings take part in these attributes to a greater or lesser degree, that is, they are more or less good, true and beautiful.

In analogous fashion we can affirm, in a certain sense, that God is Victory. And the work that comes from His hands also shares in this attribute.

At the very dawn of the creation of angelic beings, a moment when darkness seemed to prevail with Lucifer's revolt, St. Michael proclaimed: "Who is like unto God?" With his cry, the Archangel defeated the hosts of Satan with an explosion of light, becoming the paladin of the Supreme Good and the foremost avenger of God's offended honour. He thereby took part in the victory of the Most High.

After original sin, everything on earth seemed to indicate that good had perished. Expelled from Paradise, Adam and Eve would have to suffer and fight battles in this vale of tears. Nevertheless, the promise remained that the Woman – Our Lady – would crush the head of the Serpent (cf. Gn 3:15).

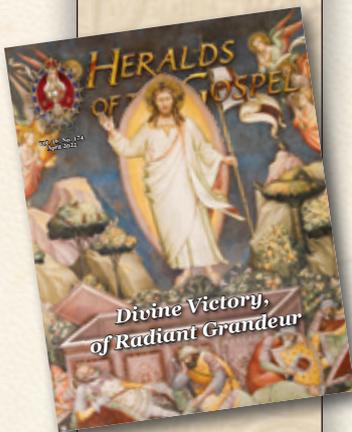
In fact, the "yes" uttered by Mary Most Holy in reply to the angelic annunciation was an overwhelming setback for the infernal legions, for Life itself would be born from Her (cf. Jn 14:6). In the Incarnate Word everything was victory, even His Death, for He thereby won the greatest triumph for mankind, the Redemption. Moreover, once risen, Jesus dies no more, "death no longer has dominion over Him" (Rom 6:9).

Nevertheless, the devil did not let his guard down, even in defeat. On the contrary, the Apostle makes it clear that our combat is not "against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). As long as the Virgin's heel does not yet deal the ultimate blow, the race of the Serpent will continue to wreak its insidious attacks on the human race.

St. Peter exhorts us to be vigilant with this treacherous enemy (cf. 1 Pt 5:8), above all by arming ourselves with spiritual weapons such as the Eucharist and the Rosary. In fact, what is most important in this battle is maintaining our interior life, even amid the harrowing ordeals to which our outward man is exposed.

In the daily struggle, the true children of the Church are therefore confident that the gates of hell will never prevail against her (cf. Mt 16:18). And the ruin of evil depends on each one of them, as Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira pointed out in his book *In Defence of Catholic Action*: "In the final analysis, the victory of the Church in the great struggle in which she is engaged depends on sanctity." Participating in the divine victory, the Saint always wins, even by death, because there is no greater triumph than Heaven.

Therefore, we must have absolute confidence in the designs of the Almighty, especially at the chaotic crossroads where we stand. The devil is an eternal loser. Thus, if the Lord is Victory, those who serve Him share in His conquest, for they have been promised: "He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with Me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne" (Rv 3:21). ✦



The Resurrection of Christ, by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini - Holy Cross Basilica, Florence (Italy)

Photo: Reproduction



God Will Provide the Final Victory!

At the moment appointed by Providence, the clouds with which they seek to veil the truth will be dispelled, and the truth will shine even more brightly in the not-too-distant future.

In every age, the Holy Church of Christ has had to fight and to suffer contradictions and persecutions for truth and justice. Instituted by Christ in order to extend the Kingdom of God to the world, and by means of the luminous law of the Gospel to lead fallen humanity to a supernatural destiny, that is, to the acquisition of the immortal goods promised by God. However, this is beyond our strength, and the Church has necessarily fought against the passions which sprang up at the feet of ancient decadence and corruption, namely, against pride, cupidity and the unbridled love of earthly pleasures, and against the resulting vices and disorders, which have always encountered the most powerful barrier in the Church.

But these persecutions are no cause for surprise, for they were foretold by the Divine Master and we know that they will last for as long as the world.

Divine sign of contradiction

What, in fact, did He say to His disciples, when He sent them to spread the treasure of His doctrine to all peoples? Everyone knows this: “You will be persecuted from city to city, you will be hated and vilified for my name, you will be dragged before the courts and condemned to torture.” And, to encourage them in their trial, He set Himself as an example: “If the

world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you” (Jn 15:18). This is the joy; this is the reward that He promised them.

No one who has the criterion for a just and honest appraisal of things will be able to explain the reason for this implacable hatred. What evil has the Divine Redeemer done, or what demerit can be attributed to Him? He came down to men impelled by infinite charity; He taught an immaculate and consoling doctrine, extremely effective in bringing men together in peace and love; He desired neither earthly greatness nor honours, He usurped no one’s rights. On the contrary, He was infinitely compassionate towards the weak, the sick, the poor, sinners and the oppressed, and He spent His life spreading divine benefits unreservedly among men.

It goes without saying that, owing to excessive human malice, more deplorable in the measure of its injustice, He became, as the aged Simeon had prophesied, a true sign of contradiction (cf. Lk 2:34).

The Church follows in the footsteps of her Master

It is no wonder, then, that the Catholic Church, purveyor of His divine mission and incorruptible depository of His truth, meet the same fate as her Master. The world is always the same; constantly opposing the children of

God are the ancillaries of that great enemy of mankind who, rebellious against the Most High from the beginning, is designated in the Gospel as the prince of this world. Therefore, in face of the law and of Him who represents it in God’s name, the world revolts in unbounded pride, in the spirit of an independence to which it has no right.

Oh, how many times, in the most tempestuous moments, have her enemies, with unheard-of cruelty and injustice, joined together to wantonly destroy the divine work, to the evident detriment of society! [...]

Evil shall not prevail against her!

We do not want the scene of the present sorrowful situation to shake the souls of the faithful’s belief in divine help. God will in due time and by mysterious means provide the final victory.

Our hearts are saddened, but we have no doubt whatsoever as to the immortal destiny of the Church. Persecution, as we said at the beginning, is her inheritance, because God prepares for her higher and more precious goods, by testing and purifying His children. But by allowing vexations and setbacks, He manifests His divine assistance, which provides her with new and unforeseen means of subsistence, by extending her work and preventing the forces conspiring against her from prevailing. Nineteen centuries of life,

through all human vicissitudes, attest that the storms pass and do not shake its foundations.

Well may we encourage you, for the present moment brings other signs that leave our faith unaltered. The difficulties are formidable and extraordinary, no doubt, but the events unfolding before our eyes testify once again that God fulfils His promises with admirable goodness and wisdom. Despite the forces that conspire against her, the Church, destitute of all human aid and support, continues to extend her action into the most diverse environments.

No, the ancient prince of this world will no longer be able to dominate as before, for he has been driven out by Jesus Christ, and Satan's attempts, though they cause many evils, will never obtain the supreme triumph. [..]

There are many reasons for hope

The rebirth and reorganization of so many associations that are now bringing joy to the Church is obvious, like the buds that spring from a tree. She neglects no form of Christian piety, whether for Jesus and the most holy mysteries of the Faith, or in praise of His Immaculate Mother, or in honour of the Saints who have shone most brightly for their outstanding virtues.

At the same time, no charitable work is forgotten, for in various ways they seek the religious education of youth, the care of the sick, the moral formation of the people, and the relief of the underprivileged classes. And how rapidly this movement would expand, and how much more useful and fruitful it would be, if it were not often hindered by unjust obstacles and hostile impositions! [..]

Therefore, the bitterness has been greatly mitigated, and in the midst of the fierce struggle there is much reason for encouragement and hope. This is a fact that should give the intelligent and dispassionate observer pause for thought and lead him to understand that just as God did not abandon man to his own considerations concerning the ultimate purpose of life, but spoke to him, He still does so in our day, speaking through His Church, visibly supported by divine aid, and by her pointing out where truth and salvation are to be found.

The triumph will not delay

This unfailing assistance should infuse our hearts with the invincible hope that at the moment appointed by Providence the clouds with which they seek to veil the truth will be dispelled, and that the truth will shine even more brightly in the not-too-distant future, and the spirit of the Gospel will revive the lethargic and corrupted members of this wayward society. [..]

Everyone can cooperate in this imperative and supremely meritorious

task: the learned and the writers with their apologia and the daily press – that powerful instrument so abused by our adversaries; parents and teachers, by the Christian education of children and youth; magistrates and representatives of the people, with the firmness of good principles and integrity of character, and everyone, by professing their own faith, without human respect. [..]

This is the duty of Catholics; but the ultimate success depends on Him who lovingly and wisely watches over His immaculate Spouse, and of whom it is written: “*Jesus Christus heri, et hodie; ipse et in sæcula*” (Heb 13:8). ✧

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*The events unfolding
before our eyes
testify once again
that God fulfils His
promises; Satan will
never obtain the
supreme triumph*

Basilica of Our Lady
of the Rosary, Cajeiros (Brazil)

Gustavo Krahl

GOSPEL



Jesus pardons the adulterous woman -
St. Patrick's Parish, Massachusetts

¹ Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² But early in the morning He arrived again in the Temple area, and all the people started coming to Him, and He sat down and taught them. ³ Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. ⁴ They said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" ⁶ They said this to test Him, so that they could have some charge to bring against Him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with His finger. ⁷ But when they continued asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again He bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So He was left alone with the woman before Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She replied, "No one, Sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more" (Jn 8:1-11).

Mercy Responds to Misery

On just one condition, the stunning, unexpected and magnanimous forgiveness of the Son of God was granted to a miserable sinner, deserving temporal and eternal death. What lesson does this episode offer us?



Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I – DOING GOOD BY COMBATTING EVIL

Sacred Revelation transmits to us the surprising richness of Our Lord’s mercy in numerous passages of the New Testament. In the Gospel of this 5th Sunday of Lent, however, forgiveness seems to reach its zenith in the account of the woman caught in adultery.

The scene takes place in the context of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem on the Feast of Tabernacles. Initially, the Divine Master, urged by His relatives, refused to go up with them to the Holy City, because His hour had not yet come (cf. Jn 7:2-9). Nevertheless, the expectation of His eventual presence in the immediate vicinity of the Temple was very high, as the Evangelist himself witnesses: “The Jews were looking for Him at the feast, and saying, ‘Where is He?’ And there was much muttering about Him among the people. While some said, ‘He is a good man,’ others said, ‘No, He is leading the people astray’” (Jn 7:11-12).

Jerusalem, crowded with pilgrims from the diaspora, is divided over Jesus of Nazareth. The elites and a portion of the people have taken a dislike to the true Messiah and denigrate Him, while a *sanior pars*, probably the majority, gladly listen to Him.

Into the fray

Within this climate of tension and danger, Our Lord makes an impromptu appearance in Jerusalem, in the midst of the festivities that have been going on for some days. He amazes the crowds with His teachings and neutralizes the objectors. Such is the radiance of His majestic goodness that the priests’ guards, charged by their leaders with arresting Him, return wonderstruck and empty-handed. Questioned about the failure of the enterprise, they reply only: “No man ever spoke like this Man!” (Jn 7:46). The trap had become a glorious victory of the Truth over hypocrisy!

It does not seem unrealistic to think that the Pharisees and the scribes, infuriated at seeing Jesus escape from their clutches, fabricated the adulteress’ affair in order to compromise and discredit Him, thus justifying His arrest before the people.

The episode, however, was a complete failure for its instigators. Our Lord dispersed them by instilling in them the terror of being unmasked. Therefore, victorious once more, He could raise the tone of His discourse and unveil the malice of His adversaries with great frankness, before the whole of Public Opinion. Acting in this way, the

Finding themselves defeated by the majesty of Our Lord Jesus Christ, His enemies looked for a way to denigrate Him before the people

In bringing the adulteress before Jesus, the Pharisees acted with malice and duplicity, stirred by intentions worthy of the sons of the devil

Divine Master teaches us that it is impossible to do good without combatting evil.

In the following verses, Jesus will affirm regarding the leaders of the people: “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am He” (Jn 8:23-24). And again He will declare with chilling severity: “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44).

Jesus’ triumph over the malice of the Pharisees and scribes in the case of the adulteress thus enabled Him to make the most implacable prophetic denunciation, inviting the people to choose Him over His detractors.

II – MOVING AND EFFICACIOUS PARDON

The scene narrated in this Sunday’s Gospel is of a splendid grandeur. In it shine forth apparently opposite virtues such as mercy carried to a highly consoling extreme for sinners, and the justice with which Our Lord, like a new and divine Daniel, threatens to unmask the hidden crimes of the Pharisees and compels them to flee from His presence driven by overpowering fear.

Francisco Lecaros



The Pharisees accuse the adulteress, detail of “Christ and the adulteress”, by Belisario Corenzio - Charterhouse of St. Martin, Naples (Italy)

The chrism of pardon

¹ Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² But early in the morning He arrived again in the Temple area, and all the people started coming to Him, and He sat down and taught them.

Our Lord customarily sacrificed His sleep to devote Himself to prayer. Then, free from the distractions of apostolic activity, what intimacy was established between the most holy humanity of the Saviour and His beloved Father? It is impossible for us to imagine, but even just by raising the question we are lifted to a higher realm and filled with awe and wonder.

Very symbolic is the detail that, before clearly manifesting His forgiveness, Jesus chose to retire to the Mount of Olives. Alcuin¹ explains that in Greek, the words *olive tree* and *mercy* share the same root. Thus, mercy would be like the fragrant balm of God that heals, purifies and revives sinners.

After a period of sacrosanct isolation, Our Lord went down to the Temple to teach the people. The people flocked there, thirsting to hear the Master: the atmosphere was set for one of the most touching manifestations of the Lord’s indulgence.

The malice and duplicity of the sons of the devil

^{3a} Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery...

Concerning the crime of adultery, Scripture was peremptory:

“If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbour, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death” (Lv 20:10; cf. Dt 22:22). In this episode, however, the accusers present only the woman and not her partner, a decisive detail for anyone aware of the diabolical malice and the venomous duplicity of the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees.

Although the guilt of the unfortunate adulteress was real,

the way of presenting the case is perfidious, enveloped in the mists of lies. In reality, it was enough for two people to witness the nefarious sin of conjugal betrayal for the stoning of the offenders to take place. And the first to throw stones should be precisely those who had witnessed the deplorable fact. Why did the Pharisees drag the accused woman away without her accomplice, and why did they not name the witnesses? Hidden behind this dishonest conduct were terrible intentions, worthy of the sons of the devil.



Francisco Lecaros

The Pharisees accuse the adulteress, detail of "Christ and the adulteress", by Belisario Corenzio - Charterhouse of St. Martin, Naples (Italy)

With the pure Thou art pure, but with the wicked...

^{3b} ...and made her stand in the middle.
⁴They said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?"

The Pharisees, in their pride, thought they were deceiving the Son of God Himself... and the trap they set was in fact cunning to the very last detail.

Our Lord was the Redeemer, the Prophet of divine goodness, the Physician come to save the sick (cf. Mk 2:17). But not only this. He was also the upright and just Teacher, who did not intend to change or lessen the Law, but to bring it to its complete fulfilment (cf. Mt 5:17). Thus, to put Him in the alternative of either forgiving the adulteress in violation of the Law, or executing the dictates of Moses without granting His mercy, was to place Him in a very difficult situation; either solution would be damaging to His image, which the Pharisees wanted at all costs to discredit.

And there was a further aggravating factor: if He chose to apply the Law in its full rigour, which seemed more probable given the severity and evidence of the facts, He would be infringing Roman law, which declared the death penalty to be solely reserved to the imperial procurator (cf. Jn 18:31).

However, although the trap set by the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees seems ingenious, divine cunning combined with the most brilliant righteousness will splendidly overcome the plots of the wicked, as the Psalmist had announced: "with the pure thou dost show thyself pure; and with the crooked thou dost show thyself perverse" (Ps 18:26).

Do not tempt the Lord, thy God

⁶They said this to test Him, so that they could have some charge to bring against Him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with His finger.

The Pharisees, blinded by the pride that made them think they were the more cunning, tempted the Son of God, thus committing a terrible sin, which would be duly punished.

Jesus, who was sitting while teaching the people, bent down in silence and wrote with His finger on the ground. This is the only occasion, according to the Gospels, when He wrote anything – and He did it to humiliate and unmask the enemies of the truth.

There are many interpretations of this divine gesture. Some authors believe that Jesus wrote down the sins of those perfidious Pharisees; others that by acting in this way He simply ignored them. Perhaps in the prophetic words of the prophet Jeremiah we find a more adequate key to interpret this attitude of the Divine Teacher: "O

This is the only time Our Lord wrote anything, and He did it to humiliate and unmask the enemies of the truth

“Let the one among you who is without sin...” Of those hearts hardened in sin, the Divine Lawgiver demanded innocence of customs and holiness of life

Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake Thee shall be put to shame; those who turn away from Thee shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water” (Jer 17:13).

An unexpected, wise and terrible sentence

⁷ But when they continued asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again He bent down and wrote on the ground.

The Pharisees, self-assured and unaware of the meaning of Our Lord’s gesture, stubbornly continued to question Him. Self-conceit clouded the insight of those unfortunate people, reducing them to foolishness. Thus they were ready to fall into the trap that they themselves had set.

Jesus, on the contrary, acts with divine sagacity, absolute superiority and assurance. In a movement imbued with grandeur and prophetism He rises and, fixing His divine gaze on those scoundrels, He says: “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” For the Divine Lawgiver it did not seem sufficient for them to have witnessed the criminal act to proceed to stoning the accused. He demanded innocence of customs and holiness of life, aware of the terrible embarrassment in which He placed those hearts hardened in sin.



Francisco Lecaros

“Christ and the adulteress”, by Nicolas Colombel - Fine Arts Museum of Rouen (France)

The scene ends with Jesus writing on the ground again, this time with the intention of making the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees understand what His action meant. It was truly a symbolic judgement, quite clear to a scholar of the Scriptures. And they seem to have comprehended and acted accordingly.

O Divine Daniel

⁹ And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So He was left alone with the woman before Him.

The scribes and Pharisees, until then boastful and presumptuous, were filled with terror at Our Lord’s reply. The word of the Incarnate Word, divinely sharpened, was more efficacious than the most deleterious of weapons: on hearing His reply, the adversaries of Jesus were pierced by the sword of conscience, which accused them of crimes more horrendous and numerous than those of the wretched sinner they were denouncing.

Did they recall the chaste Susanna and the prophet Daniel? That chosen one of God, young but filled with zeal for justice, undid with keen discernment the plots of two old judges, entrenched in their lust, who tried to condemn an innocent woman.

Did the Pharisees and teachers of the Law fear being discovered by Jesus’ discernment?

Everything points in that direction. The miracles He worked, the wisdom of His words and the accuracy of His predictions suggested that He was a far greater prophet than Daniel. Might He not, before the people gathered there, unmask them and expose their shame? Of what use would have been the abject veil of hypocrisy with which they tried to cover up their crimes? What is certain is that “they went away one by one, beginning with the



“Susanna before Daniel”, by Sebastiano Ricci -
Sabauda Galelry, Turin (Italy)

elders.” What a splendid victory for Jesus! However, He chose not to publicly reveal the transgressions of those rogues in order to give them another opportunity to convert – an opportunity that would be rejected once again.

As a result of Our Lord’s words, the situation was completely reversed. The accusers withdrew, vanquished, while the guilty woman, recognizing the Redeemer’s judicial authority, remained before Him awaiting sentence. It is difficult to imagine the feelings of repentance, fear, hope and astonishment that assailed the adulteress’ heart as she was freed from her implacable denouncers, alone in the midst of the crowd, looking up to the One who could save or condemn her. Thus unfolded the touching and sublime encounter of misery with Mercy.

Generous pardon and serious repentance

¹⁰Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹She replied, “No one, Sir.” Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.”

After dispersing His enemies, Our Lord arose. The manner in which He pronounces sentence is one of absolute perfection, as if to say, “Since your detractors have departed laden with crimes, I, who am Innocence and the redeeming God,

do not condemn you either. Do you not remember what I said through the lips of Ezekiel, ‘Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?’ (Ez 18:23). And again: ‘As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?’ (Ez 33:11). Therefore, daughter, I say to you: you may go, and from now on sin no more. Leave the paths of vice and take the road that leads to my Kingdom. The pardon that I now grant you for your transgression will cost Me my life, but I am the Good Shepherd and have come to shed all my Blood for the lost sheep.”

Jesus shows His compassion for the sinner, but evinces His hatred for sin, and commands the adulteress, with grave kindness, no longer to disobey the Commandments of her Father. Indeed, the best penance consists in never returning to past faults.

It may be supposed that, together with His words, Our Lord infused into the soul of the unfortunate woman a sincere, serious and profound grace of sorrow for the evil committed, as well as an efficacious strength for the practice of the virtue of continence. She, dead through guilt, was brought back to life through forgiveness; her filth was transformed into virtue by the Fountain of living waters.

*Did they
recall the
chaste
Susanna and
the prophet
Daniel? The
miracles of
Jesus and the
wisdom of
His words
showed
Him to be a
far greater
prophet...*

The woman who had been dead through guilt, was brought back to life through forgiveness! The same happens to us when we turn with sincerity to the Sacrament of Confession



The Sacrament of Penance, by Francesco Novelli

III – LET US SIN NO MORE!

Sin of any kind can be compared to adultery. In Sacred Scripture, idolatry is often associated with marital unfaithfulness, which was wisely detested beginning with the Mosaic Law. This relationship has a profound meaning that deserves our attention.

The First Commandment prescribes a total, unconditional and exclusive love for God. Our Lord Himself recalls it with great emphasis: “The first [Commandment] is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength’” (Mk 12:29-30). This love must bind us to God by an entirely spiritual union, more intimate and sacred than that of the spouses in chaste matrimony.

At the opposite extreme, St. Augustine² defines sin as an aversion to God and an inclination towards creatures. Thus, to turn one’s back on the Almighty in order to idolize contingent beings in His place is a betrayal similar to adultery, since it means leaving the one true Love in order to follow the ephemeral, the passing and the deceptive. In this sense, we offend God with our faults in a way similar or worse than the adulteress with her concupiscence.

Let us put ourselves in the place of this poor woman. Guilty of sin, we may have deserved hell on more than one occasion, if not many times.

The fear of stoning is a mere shadow compared to the light of salutary dread that should inspire us at the thought of eternal punishment, of fire and gnashing of teeth, as well as the penalty of damnation, which consists in remaining an enemy of God forever and ever. Surely, the imminence of being buried under a rain of stones caused the culprit to reflect. How can we fail to think of the consequences of dying in mortal sin?

On the other hand, let us consider the usefulness of humiliation. How many do not find it unbearable to lower themselves to the point of declaring their faults to a priest? Let us think,

however, of the good it did the adulteress to find herself publicly incriminated, before a multitude who looked upon her with revulsion. It is better to be humbled in this life than to suffer the contempt of the Angels and Blessed for all eternity. Blessed Sacrament of Confession! We need only to be sincere and to accuse ourselves with simplicity for God’s heart to change in our regard, and instead of hearing a sentence of condemnation, we shall hear the gentle and paternal formula of absolution.

This will be the case, provided we are willing to sin no more!

And our conversion may be made easier by the fact that we can count on Our Lady’s help. She was the royal and unsurpassable gift which the Good Shepherd gave to us from the Cross, in an act of utmost compassion. Thanks to Mary’s omnipotent mediation, there is no sin that does not obtain ample and immediate pardon, and there is no sinner who cannot be perfectly sanctified. Let us trust in her maternal and immaculate Heart, which is the expression of her ineffable goodness, of her unspeakable sweetness, and her inexhaustible mercy. ✧

¹ Cf. ALCUIN, apud ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Catena Aurea. In Ioannem*, c.VIII, v.1-11.

² Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *De libero arbitrio*. L.I, c.16, n.35. In: *Obras*. 3.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1963, v.III, p.245.

A Gaze that Can Save Us

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

Our Lady has eyes of mercy, and a simple gaze from Her can save us. Her gentleness is invariable, her help unlimited; She is ready to help us at any moment, especially in the difficulties of our spiritual life. These are usually of two kinds.

In the first place, in that crisis which could be called classic, when the person feels tempted and therefore hesitant between good and evil, with the possibility of being thrown off the precipice of sin from one moment to the next. It seems quite evident that in these circumstances, Mary is our help in the fullness of the term.

But the Mother of Mercy's solicitude also goes out to those who find themselves in a much graver spiritual predicament, which is expressed in this plea: "My Mother, I, succumbing to the weight of temptation, have not done well. I have sinned. I fear that I will grow accustomed to sin and become brutalized by it. On the other hand, my desire to regenerate myself is immense. I know that I do not deserve your protection, but because You are the Help of all Christians, not only the good, but even the most miserable, I ask you: come and help me. In this case, it is the very fact of having fallen into sin that is raised before

Our Lady as a reason to obtain her help. It is the helpless person who finds in his misfortune the reason for imploring Mary's mercy.

It is in the mission of the Blessed Virgin, it is the profound movement of her maternal Heart, to reconcile sinners with God. For the Mother has kindness, tenderness, indulgence and patience that others do not possess. She then asks her Divine Son for us, and obtains for us a series of graces, a countless number of pardons that we would never have obtained without her intercession.

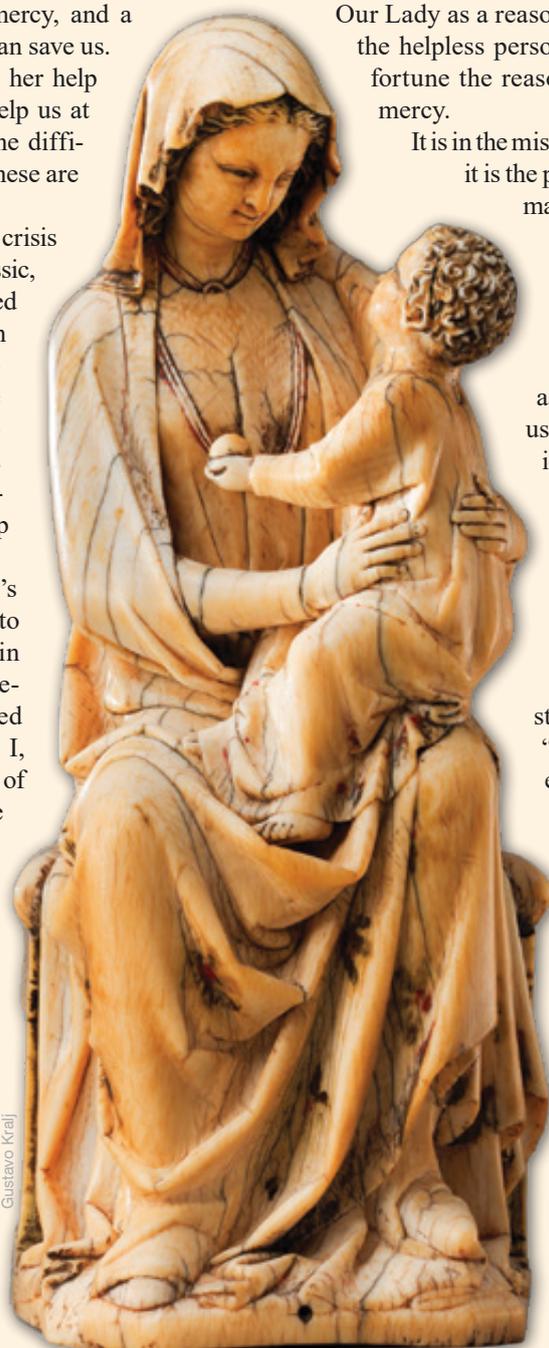
It is therefore with all confidence that we should turn to Her constantly, beseeching Her: "Turn, O Mother, thine eyes of mercy towards us!" ✧

CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio.

"Vossos olhos misericordiosos a nós volvei..." ["Turn thy merciful eyes towards us..."] In: *Dr. Plinio*.

São Paulo.

Year II. No.10
(Jan., 1999); p.28



Gustavo Krailj

The Virgin and Child -
Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York

The Encounter

Between Two Pontiffs

In one of the most momentous scenes in history, the transient pontiff meets the Eternal Pontiff; the high priest of the Old Law meets the High Priest of the New Covenant; a christ meets the Christ; the prefigure meets its fulfilment.



Nelson José Camilo López



Turning the pages of the Gospels, we are moved when we contemplate the marvels Our Saviour accomplished when He “became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). Impelled by infinite love, He brought us the Good News and confirmed it by countless miracles, not limited to restoring a natural well-being to the ailing, but aimed principally at reinstating in souls that union with their Creator that had been lost through sin.

In fact, the “time had fully come” (Gal 4:4), and humanity was to be the

object of the greatest proof of divine love: the Redemption wrought by the Incarnate Word, to be accomplished at that most blessed moment of the “*Consummatum est*” (Jn 19:30).

Nevertheless, Our Lord willed that this sublime reconciliation be foreshadowed in various ways. One of these was the establishment of the Levitical priesthood in Aaron, through the mediation of Moses – an institution that was to usher in the manifestation of Jesus’ eternal priesthood to the world.

But the attitude of the religious authorities of Israel was quite different, and their rejection of the plans of Providence for them would be consummated in the trial of the Son of God at the outset of the Passion.

Levitical priesthood: prefigure of the eternal priesthood

The institution of the Levitical priesthood was intended to instate men who would serve as a bridge between humanity and God, in other words, who would be prefigures of the One who would effectively unite Heaven and earth.

This mission applied to the high priest above all, which is why he

The high priest was to serve as a bridge between humanity and God, thereby prefiguring the One who would unite Heaven and earth

Our Lord before Caiaphas - St. Gonzalo Parish, Seville (Spain)

was designated with the term *pontiff*, whose etymology is *bridge-builder*. He held pre-eminence among the Levites (cf. Lv 21:10).

When he was consecrated, the pontiff was anointed with oil (cf. Lv 8:12; Nm 3:3). From a certain aspect he could thereby be considered a *christ* – meaning *anointed*, in Greek – which lent him yet another facet that prefigured the Messiah.

This was initially a life-long and hereditary office. Moreover, the position belonged to the descendants of Aaron, and not just to any Levite. However, the succession was interrupted at the time of the Maccabees, when Jonathan assumed the pontificate (cf. 1 Mc 10:20).

Herod the Great would later eliminate its life-tenure and, at the time of Our Lord, this title was practically purchased from the Roman rulers, then in power throughout Judea. Thus the high priesthood diverged enormously from the design that God had outlined for it in the Mosaic Law.

High priest at the apex of history

Three Gospels mention Caiaphas by name (cf. Mt 26:3,57; Lk 3:2; Jn 11:49; 18:13) as the high priest in office during the Saviour's public life.

Was he a legitimate pontiff? St. John recognizes him as such (cf. Jn 11:51). Nevertheless, one thing is certain: from the moment he turned against Jesus Christ, denying that He was the Messiah, he became a usurper.

Married to the daughter of Annas, the former pontiff, he was appointed high priest by Valerius Gratus. The Lémann brothers,¹ Jewish converts and priests of Christ, set his pontificate between 25-36 AD. He was deposed in the year 36 by Vitellius, governor of Syria, at the time of Pilate's deposition.

A striking feature is his long tenure: his three predecessors did not

manage to secure this high office for more than a year, and the five pontiffs who succeeded him most closely had tenures similar to theirs.

Being the high priest at that juncture of humanity's history, would he not possess a singular vocation? We can legitimately ponder what this soul's calling might have been. If Caiaphas had corresponded to grace, what wonders could have come about? He was meant to be a *pontiff* in all respects, for it was up to him to build the bridge connecting the old priesthood to the new. It was certainly his duty to humbly submit to Our Lord and, as it were, lay the millenary institution of the priesthood at His feet, soon to see it raised to the rank of a Sacrament.

What happened, however, was exactly the opposite: he unleashed a ferocious persecution against Him, whom he wrongly judged a threat to his stability in the pontificate, and finally effected Our Lord's arrest, intent on condemning Him to death.

Two pontiffs meet

When the hour of the trial arrived, it was the encounter between two pontiffs. In fact, the transient supreme pontiff then met head-on with the Eternal Pontiff, the high priest of the Old Law with the High Priest of the New Covenant (cf. Heb 9:15), a christ with the Christ, the prefiguration with its full realization.

*In turning
against Jesus Christ
and denying
that He was the
Messiah,
Caiaphas became
a usurper*

The so-called trial took place in the house of Caiaphas himself, where the Sanhedrin had gathered to manipulate the condemnation of the Just One at any price, even if this required numerous infractions from both a juridical and a religious standpoint.²

With one artifice after another, the members of this perfidious assembly spared no effort to achieve their objectives. The pontiff and Sanhedrin hierarchy seethed with fear, insecurity and haste, which led them to act recklessly.

They bribed men to provide false testimony. "That parade of 'false witnesses,' whose fraudulence was well-known, as St. Matthew clearly points out (cf. Mt 26:59-60), reveals an inconceivable level of perversity and moral deformity."³



GOSPEL

Then those who had seized Jesus led Him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter followed Him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.

Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus that they might put Him to death, but they found none,

though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days.'"

And the high priest stood up and said, "Have You no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?" But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, tell us if You are

the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven."

Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard His blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death" (Mt 26:57-66).

When this manoeuvre failed to yield the desired outcome, Caiaphas, launched a new attack, likewise illicit, to force the Saviour to testify against Himself: "I adjure You by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God" (Mt 26:63).

To compel someone to testify in favour of his own condemnation is a completely illegitimate measure. Our Lord answers, not out of respect for an authority that lacks the right to interrogate, but because His silence on that occasion would be tantamount to a retraction.

As soon as Jesus categorically affirms that He is the Son of God, Caiaphas rends his garments, overcome with wrath as if he had just heard a blasphemy. St. Jerome offers an insightful commentary on this detail: "The prince of the priests rends his garments to show that the Jews had lost the glory of the priesthood and that the seat of the pontiffs was vacant."⁴

What was the source of such hatred?

Beholding this scene, we might wonder where the source lay, of this great hatred that not only Caiaphas but also the other priests bore for Him

who was the "hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20).

It could be argued that they were not aware that Our Lord was indeed the Messiah, come into the world. After all, did He Himself not ask for His executioners to be pardoned because they did not know what they were doing? Regarding this request of Jesus – the first words He uttered on the Cross – St. Thomas Aquinas⁵ distinguishes that the blame for the Divine Master's condemnation fell differently upon two categories of people: the general public and the religious authorities.

The former asked for His death because they were spurred on by their leaders. However, Our Lord says that they were guilty, in spite of their ignorance, for no one asks pardon for someone who is free of fault. Indeed, among those who cried out "Crucify Him," how many had not been healed, exorcised and forgiven by the Good Shepherd? Only God knows the number...

For their part, the Jewish authorities were sufficiently equipped, given their vast knowledge of the prophecies and Holy Scripture, to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. And

the innumerable miracles He worked overwhelmingly verified this, as the high priests themselves confirmed when they declared that Our Lord had to die, otherwise all would believe in Him (cf. Jn 11:48). Moreover, in His final verbal exchanges with His opponents before the Passion, the Saviour spared no theological and philosophical argument. And since the Sanhedrin members were unable to answer Him, we see that His reasoning was more than sufficient to finally convince them of His divine person and mission.

Blinded by hatred and envy, they preferred not to believe that He was the Son of God; and this culpable ignorance aggravated their guilt. For this reason, the Angelic Doctor concludes that the words of the Divine Crucified One applied to the humbler classes of the people, and not to the Jewish rulers.⁶

A worthless sentence?

The condemnation of Jesus ensued, and closure was reached in that trial "whose judges were devoid of moral weight, and whose sentence was devoid of juridic value,"⁷ in the words of the Lémann brothers.

The opinion of the two scholars is entirely reasonable, but is it absolute from every perspective? From the juridical standpoint, Our Lord's condemnation was altogether worthless. But did this immense sin, perpetrated with consummate iniquity, not weigh in another field? Would such a condemnation not generate serious consequences?

A small detail in the Gospel of John may shed some light on the matter: the Apostle does not recount the trial that took place in Caiaphas' house, but only mentions it (cf. Jn 18:24, 28). Why this silence, precisely on the part of the Evangelist who describes the Passion with the greatest wealth of detail?

Fr. Ignace de la Potterie⁸ comments that it is not easy to interpret a silence, since there may exist numerous reasons for not mentioning something. However, he hypothesizes that, unlike the other Evangelists, who try to stress the trial's fraudulent aspect, the Beloved Disciple views it from a higher angle.

While the historical scenario presents us with the infamous condemnation of the Just One, the theological reflection points to an entirely different dimension: the entire Passion was a trial, in which Our Lord

was the true Judge and the defendant was the world (cf. Jn 12:31). The vicissitudes of the iniquitous proceedings were of minor interest to St. John, for he could see, beyond those facts, the supernatural impli-

cations of what was going on: when Caiaphas and the other Judaic authorities clamoured for the Crucifixion of the God-Man, they brought the sentence of condemnation down upon themselves.



Jesus before Caiaphas, by Martin Schongauer - Unterlinden Museum, Colmar (France)

In reality, the entire Passion was a trial, in which Our Lord Jesus Christ was the true Judge and the defendant was the world

**Despite all evils,
God always wins!**

Regrettably, Caiaphas and the other chief priests were not faithful to the charge which God had entrusted to them of leading the people to Him – “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6). On the contrary, they rejected Him with mortal hatred and condemned the Supreme Judge to death by means of an unjust judgment, imagining that they attained His utter defeat thereby.

However, even if the enemies of God multiply their conspiracies,

He will not fail to carry out His plans. In truth, with the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the prophecies reached the apex of fulfilment. In being outraged, insulted, buffeted, condemned, scourged, crowned with thorns and finally put to death on the Cross, Our Lord won the greatest victory in history: He not only restored sinful humanity to union with God, perfectly fulfilling His role as Supreme Pontiff, but He also opened the gates of Heaven for us. ✧

¹ Cf. LÉMANN, Augustin; LÉMANN, Joseph. *Valeur de l'assemblée qui prononça la peine de mort contre Jésus-Christ*. 3.ed. Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1881, p.32.

² Regarding the transgressions that made the process that condemned Christ invalid, see the article: VIETO

RODRÍGUEZ, Santiago. The Most Unjust and Infamous Judgement in History. In: *Heralds of the Gospel*. Nobleton. Vol. 12. No.125 (March, 2018); p.16-19.

³ CASTRILLO AGUADO, Tomás. *Enemigos de Jesús en la Pasión, según los Evangelios*. Madrid: FAX, 1960, p.104.

⁴ ST. JEROME. *Comentario a Mateo*. L.IV (22,41-28,20), c.26, n.261. In: *Obras Completas*. Madrid: BAC, 2002, v.II, p.391.

⁵ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. III, q.47, a.5-6.

⁶ Cf. Idem, a.6, ad 1.

⁷ LÉMANN; LÉMANN, op. cit., p.108.

⁸ Cf. LA POTTERIE, Ignace de. *La Pasión de Jesús según San Juan. Texto y espíritu*. Madrid: BAC, 2007, p.52-54.



“I’ll become a famous nun!”

Dreaming of the Hollywood stage, a talented young woman received an unexpected proposal... Little did she imagine that behind this invitation was the hand of Providence eager to draw her to Himself.



Sr. Diana Devia, EP

In the 21st century, more than two thousand years after the supreme Sacrifice on Calvary, holiness is often thought to be a passé ideal, incompatible with life in today’s world, unattainable in the midst of globalization, unthinkable in the world of instant messaging and social networks.

This is what a young woman with a dissipated lifestyle thought until, one Good Friday, the gaze of the Crucified One changed the course of her life...

A talented Irish girl

Clare Theresa Crockett was born in the city of Derry in Northern Ireland on November 14, 1982. The first child of Gerard Crockett and Margaret Doyle, she demonstrated from an early age that she had a strong, charming and vivacious character. Brimming with natural gifts and talents, she spread a contagious joy and was always surrounded by friends, although her fiery temperament was frequently the cause of fights and disagreements...

A born actress, accustomed to being the centre of attention and known

as a challenging child, Clare gave her teachers a hard time with her mischievous ways. Very bright, she pursued her studies successfully with little effort. However, she sometimes resorted to unscrupulous methods: once time she even stole the teacher’s answer book in order to complete her lessons more quickly...

As could be expected, Clare did not always apply her abilities to good ends. She also took advantage of them to lie, exaggerate, and to shirk responsibility... For her, everything was justified when it was a matter of attaining her objectives.

The girl grew up in a Catholic environment, until her family was afflicted by a series of adversities that led to a marked estrangement from the Faith. Although she continued to fulfil some religious duties that her parents demanded of her to keep up appearances, she gradually abandoned the true path to tread another, strewn with vice and sin. Very early, she became acquainted with smoking, alcohol and bad company; she went to nightclubs using fake identification and drank in an unrestrained manner.

In spite of this, a unique quality blossomed in her personality: determination. “All or nothing” was, in fact, the motto that guided her life.

Dreaming of a Hollywood career

Having developed her artistic gifts, Clare played various roles in theatre, commercials and television programs in pursuit of her great dream: to be a famous actress. She dedicated herself to the study of performing arts and took every opportunity to demonstrate her talent, in which those around her placed great hopes.

However, as time passed, far from feeling happy with her achievements, Clare began to notice the immense and constant emptiness that she felt in her heart: each new success brought her deep depression. Although she was still attracted to prestige and worldly glories, she felt there was something beyond the kind of happiness she was chasing after. However, unable to understand what it was, she sank deeper and deeper into her vices.

A spiritual retreat instead of the beach...

In the year 2000, Clare received an invitation. To be precise, it was a misunderstanding, which in reality was the hand of Providence eager to draw her to Himself.

Her best friend, Sharon Doherty, was scheduled to travel to Spain for Easter week. However, some time before, she was stricken with acute appendicitis and was unable to take the trip. Not wanting to lose her place, which had already been paid for, she offered it to Clare. The latter, misled by the touristic allure of the place, accepted the proposal, certain that beautiful beaches and bustling night-clubs awaited her.

What she could not imagine was that she was leaving for a Holy Week retreat with Home of the Mother,¹ and a pilgrimage to various shrines in Europe. It was a monumental shock for her to find herself confronted with days of compulsory prayer! Unable to extricate herself from the commitment, she decided to make the best of the trip, taking part as little as possible in the meetings and meditations.

However, Good Friday being such a special day, Clare could not avoid the liturgical ceremony. At a certain moment, without really knowing what it was all about, she got in line like everyone else to adore the Holy Cross. Just imitating what the people in front of her were doing, she genuflected and kissed the Crucifix. However, this act had a strong interior impact on her.

This is how she describes the grace that touched her: “I do not know how to explain exactly what happened. I did not see choirs of Angels or a white dove come down from the ceiling and descend on me, but I had the certainty that the Lord was on the Cross, for me. And along with that conviction, I felt a great sorrow [...]. When I returned to my pew, I had imprinted in

me something that was not there before. I had to do something for Him who had given His life for me.”²

Unexpectedly, Clare found herself on that occasion alone with Jesus, and experienced immense sorrow for her sins – committed against that Love which was poured out upon her – and understood that she could do nothing to console Him except give her life to Him.

“He loves me. He died for me,” was the only thing she could articulate, amid tears, after the blessed celebration. In a manner in keeping with her still-superficial nature, Clare came up with a unique solution to combine her longing for celebrity with her new desire for holiness, explaining to all the pilgrims on the same day that grace had visited her: “I want to be famous. [...] An hour ago, I was all, ‘I want to become a nun too.’ So then I said to myself, ‘I’ll become a famous nun!’”³

Clare could scarcely have imagined that her dream would be fulfilled to the letter: God would indeed make of her what she envisaged on that occasion!

New falls and the final resolution

However, the path this soul still had to tread was a long one, filled with obstacles. Inside herself, the weakness of fallen human nature was mixed with the heart of an eagle which was hesitant to take flight.

After a second trip with the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother, the women’s branch of the Association, she returned to Ireland and her struggle became more intense. School and parties once again filled her daily life, month after month, and she did not resolve to break with the world. Bad friendships and vices dragged her, like another Magdalene,



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“I had the certainty that the Lord was on the Cross for me [...]. I had to do something for Him who had given His life for me”

Clare kissing the crucifix during the Good Friday ceremony at the Monastery of St. Michael of Victories, Priego (Spain); inset, narrating the grace she had just received; previous page, Sr. Clare in 2011



The decisive step towards religious life cost Clare dearly; to detach herself from her family and face the opposition of friends and acquaintances were some of the battles that she had to win

From left to right: Clare on her First Communion day; at a party in checked shirt, at age fifteen; with a friend during a pilgrimage to Florence (Italy)

into even worse abysses than the previous ones.

Clare wanted to erase from her memory the graces she had received with the Sisters of the Home, but the Lord “pursued” her with fatherly love. Once, while in a discotheque, she sensed the reproachful and affectionate gaze of the Saviour saying to her: “Why do you keep hurting Me?” It was the Good Shepherd seeking the wayward sheep, imploring her to abandon herself to His divine care, which could heal her.

The devil, however, would play his last great card in the difficult conquest of that heart, making the long-dreamed-of doors of Hollywood open before her. In February 2001, Clare landed a role in a film produced by the BBC. Although a minor role, it could have been the promising beginning of her career as a professional actress. The filming would take place in Manchester and she would stay in five-star hotels in the company of various celebrities.

From a worldly point of view, Clare couldn’t have wished for more at that moment in her life. She could palpably feel her brilliant future... But she felt

unhappy and, in the end, she understood that her place was far from there. Thus, she resolved to leave.

The decisive step towards religious life cost Clare dearly. To detach herself from her family, to face the opposition of friends and acquaintances and to abandon so many vices were some of the struggles that she, strengthened by God, managed to overcome. She soon discerned what she should be in the Association: “A holy servant, closely united to Him, willing to suffer anything and go anywhere for His sake.”⁷⁴

Aiming to achieve this goal, she began right away to pray insistently for the gift of fidelity: “Help me to hate the sin that You hate, that stains me and distances me from You. I don’t want to give You any more thorns, I don’t want my God to weep for me.”⁷⁵

School of love

Outstanding graces and a profound knowledge of her nothingness and of her personal misery filled the first months of her life as a religious and prompted the many insights that she wrote in her notebooks with a simplicity proper to the friends of God.

It is worth mentioning her absolute ignorance in religious matters, but what she did not know through her intelligence, God mysteriously communicated to her soul: “Father, although I do not deserve it and I am an ungrateful daughter, You have at times made me experience Mount Tabor, the glory of Christ and of the Trinity in me, in the depth of my soul.”⁷⁶

Nevertheless, sanctity was a bitter struggle for Clare. She felt weak, she often relapsed into the same miseries as before, and she saw herself in need of great purification, as can be seen in the notes of her spiritual journey: “Despite my efforts at union with the Lord, at times I fell into egotism”;⁷⁷ “Do I want to overcome myself? Yes. What makes me suffer the most? Not being a reflection of Him, not being like Him. My lack of charity and humility.”⁷⁸

The keynote of her path of sanctification was always love, with which she sought to repay God’s infinite Love for her. And, well aware that to love implies suffering and self-denial, she taught: “Love is sacrificial, not superficial or sentimental.” She also had a deep devotion to the Bless-



Photos: Reproduction

Clare proved that sanctity is the only way to Heaven and that it is within everyone’s reach, through the infinite merits of the Passion of the Redeemer

From left to right: Clare, at centre, as a postulant of the Servants of the Home of the Mother; professing her temporary vows, on February 18, 2006; dressed in her work habit in Priego (Spain) in 2009

ed Virgin: “I know that I am very dear to her Heart and sometimes She has let me rest there.”¹⁰

In the midst of struggles and decisive spiritual progress, on September 8, 2010, Clare finally made her perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Due to her union with Our Lady and the Three Divine Persons, she decided to take the name Sister Clare Mary of the Trinity and the Heart of Mary.

Faithful until the end

Without losing any of her radiant joy, her artistic talent and her personal charisma, Sr. Clare gradually became an authentic example of generosity for all those who lived with her. Throughout her fifteen years of religious life, wherever she was, she stood out for her obedience, her self-giving and her radical dedication to and observance of Catholic morals.

She was not afraid to indicate the right path to those she directed, or to be clear about the demands of virtue, as the fruit of her insistent petitions to the Lord: “Give me the grace never to be afraid to bear witness to You, never to hide my rosary when I go out [...]. Help me never to flee from the wolf.”¹¹

The trials with which God wanted to purify her were sometimes surprising in their severity; nevertheless, her sensitive and weak soul became strong by allowing itself to be crucified with the Crucified and, for this reason, she never manifested the interior desolation which she often felt.

Having advanced in a very definitive manner on the path of self-denial, love of God and sacrificial giving of herself to her neighbour, on April 16, 2016 Providence came to harvest her soul, like an agreeable fruit, ripened by sufferings and sweetened by charity. An earthquake in the city of

Playa Prieta, Ecuador, where she then resided, put an end to her earthly trajectory. She was the only religious to die in that event, and by the goodness of Our Lady she was very well prepared for it.

Let us give ourselves entirely to God!

Clare was a model of authentic conversion for the humanity of our century. She proved with her own life that sanctity is the only way to Heaven and that it is within the reach of everyone, through the infinite merits of the Passion of the Redeemer.

Today each one of us is called to follow her example, putting all that we are and possess into God’s hands, without keeping anything for our own egoism! May she intercede for us and grant us a profound comprehension of the fact that we cannot offer the Divine Lamb anything by halves; it is a matter of giving Him “all or nothing”! ✦

¹ Public Association of Faithful founded in Spain by Fr. Rafael Alonso Reymundo.

² GARDNER, SHM, Kristen. *Hermana Clare Crockett*,

sierva del Hogar de la Madre. Sola con el Solo. Zurita: Fundación E.U.K. Mamie, 2020, p.63.

³ Idem, p.65-66.

⁴ Idem, p.143.

⁵ Idem, p.147.

⁶ Idem, p.165.

⁷ Idem, p.153.

⁸ Idem, p.145.

⁹ Idem, p.231.

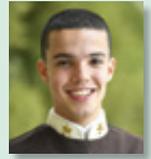
¹⁰ Idem, p.167.

¹¹ Idem, p.158.

EMMANUELE BRUNATTO

Persecuting the Persecutors of Padre Pio

At the side of the wonderworker Franciscan with the stigmata, Providence deigned to place a disciple who would defend his rights, so often violated by the internal and external enemies of the Church.



Lucas Rezende de Souza

Perhaps there was no place in the Europe of 1919 that surpassed Gargano in peace and tranquillity, a promontory which harmonized both the ruggedness and the innocence of landscapes hardly touched by human hands.

Atop the rock looking out on the Adriatic Sea, from which the picturesque village of San Giovanni Rotondo rises, people used to live in a serenity almost unknown to a humanity accustomed to the constant noise of modern megalopolises.

However, starting in May 1919, visitors from all over the world began to invade this placid setting. They were not tourists; they wanted to see a man of God – *il santo*, as he was called – who, they said, read the innermost depths of souls, worked miracles and bore in his own body the signs of the Passion of Christ. The fame of Francesco Forgione, the Capuchin friar better known as Padre Pio, spread like wildfire. Amid so many prodigies, the conversion of a prosperous businessman named Emmanuele Brunatto is especially noteworthy.

Born in Turin on September 9, 1892, Brunatto had led a dissolute life until, in 1919, through a periodical of the time that fell into his hands, he learned of the existence of a friar who had received the stigmata of the Passion of Christ. More out of curiosity than piety, he decided to see him with his own eyes, a desire that he only fulfilled a year later, after being struck by a financial catastrophe.

To the amazement of many, at the age of twenty-eight Emmanuele Brunatto was converted after a radical Confession with the Saint. So complete

At San Giovanni Rotondo, visitors began to flock from all over the world, not for tourism, but to see a man of God

San Giovanni Monastery Rotondo (Italy), in 1953



Photos: Reproduction

was his transformation that he was authorized to live in the Capuchin friary as an assistant of one whom he would henceforth consider his spiritual father.

Padre Pio persecuted

The monastery of San Giovanni Rotondo was part of the Archdiocese of Manfredonia, headed by Archbishop Pasquale Gagliardi. While enthusiasm for Padre Pio was growing among the faithful, this prelate and some canons of the village, unfortunately displeased by the situation created by the stigmatic monk's fame, spread the most deplorable calumnies against him. And the worst was yet to come.

Fr. Agostino Gemelli, a Franciscan priest who had led a life estranged from religion until the age of twenty-five, when he converted, paid a visit to Padre Pio in 1920 to examine his stigmata. However, the authorities had decided the previous year that any examination of the wounds of the religious would only be carried out with the written authorization of the Holy Office and of the Capuchin superior. Since the priest lacked this authorization, the Saint could not show him the signs of the Passion. Disgruntled, Gemelli began to proclaim everywhere that the wounds were self-inflicted injuries, and that he himself had examined them.

On January 22, 1922, Pope Benedict XV died, and Pius XI, whose friendship Fr. Gemelli enjoyed, ascended to the papal throne... Less than three months after his coronation, the Holy Office decided to place Padre Pio under observation.

In May of the following year, a severe condemnation of Padre Pio was



Padre Pio and Emmanuele Brunatto (at right), em 1924

Displeased with the enthusiasm of the faithful for Padre Pio, some ecclesiastics began to spread calumnies against him

published, in which the Vatican Congregation continually reiterated the necessity of transferring him to another monastery. Despite a canonical error in the document,¹ attempts were made to enforce the decisions, but in vain: the pressure of the population was such that it became impossible to transfer the Italian Saint without resorting to force.

Faced with such an injustice, Padre Pio's "first spiritual son" did not remain idle.

Example of resistance to persecutions

Brunatto began to investigate the far-from-exemplary life of Padre

Pio's persecutors. He managed to gather a great deal of evidence in this regard and immediately proceeded to Rome to inform the Holy See. Nevertheless, his efforts yielded little results. In fact, there he only found the support of St. Luigi Orione and of Cardinals Pietro Gasparri and Merry del Val. Brunatto realized that hostility to Padre Pio did not come only from a simple Bishop of Manfredonia and a few canons.

He decided, then, to employ more radical means. On April 21, 1926, he wrote the book *Padre Pio of Pietrelcina* – condemned by the Vatican two days after publication – in which he showed the true moral physiognomy of those slanderers.

Despite the condemnation of the work, good results were obtained from it: the appointment of an apostolic visitor to correct the moral deviations denounced, and the designation of Brunatto himself as auxiliary. As for Archbishop Gagliardi, some years later he was dismissed from his post, after an inquiry solicited by the priests of his archdiocese, due to long-standing horrors that decency prevents us from transcribing here.

A "bombshell book"

After some time, Cardinal Merry del Val commissioned Brunatto to carry out an investigation into the licentious habits of certain personalities of the highest religious sphere, a task he successfully completed. Armed with the information obtained, he decided, by way of pressure to free Padre Pio, by circulating a *Letter to the Church*, in which he

made public the terrible moral life of the persecutors of his spiritual father, some of whom held high ecclesiastical offices.

However, this time the result was not favourable: in response, a decree was published which obliged Padre Pio to celebrate his Masses only within the walls of the monastery, and not in a public church, and deprived him of all other faculties of ministry. If Brunatto had combined his impetus with wise diplomacy, perhaps the outcome would have been different...

His friend and auxiliary, the lawyer Francesco Morcaldi, also lacked sagacity. He was persuaded by certain authorities to hand over several documents in his possession, which had served as a basis for the drafting of the *Letter to the Church*, in exchange for a supposed “liberating measure”, that was never taken, regarding Padre Pio.

Disillusioned, Brunatto decided not to give an inch and published, in 1932, a “bombshell book”: *The Antichrists in the Church of Christ*. In it he denounced not only the declared enemies of the stigmatic friar, but also other high-ranking personalities who by their behaviour demeaned the dignity of their office... The result was immediate: on July 14, 1933, Padre Pio was set free. Pope Pius XI himself stated that it was “the first time in the history of the Church that the Holy Office had retracted its decrees.”²

Prelude to a new persecution

The Franciscan Saint was able to live in peace for another thirty years. Miracles and healings did not cease and the devotees multiplied; however, he was far from being rid of his persecutors...

The economic situation of the Capuchins in Italy was critical. This was especially so in Foggia, where the religious had deposited large sums

of money in the hands of a famous banker, Giuffrè, who went bankrupt. Everything they had handed over to him was lost.

Padre Pio had never been involved in this affair and advised his brothers in the habit against it. Since he sought the Kingdom of God and His justice, he confided that the rest would be given him in addition (cf. Mt 6:33). In fact, donations came pouring in and with them the Saint was able to maintain a hospital he had built, the *Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza*, the property for which had been donated by Emmanuele Brunatto himself.

In the meantime some of Padre Pio’s confreres began to misappropriate the donations intended for him. The news reached the Vatican, and Msgr. Mario Crovini was commissioned to investigate this situation, which unfortunately was real. The culprits received some sanctions. However, as soon as the mission was over, Pope John XXIII gave his

consent to a request from the General Minister of the Capuchins: an apostolic visitation which would put an end to Padre Pio’s “incapacity” to govern the hospital.

As soon as this decision was taken, some of Padre Pio’s confreres began to “investigate him”, placing tape recorders in several private places, such as his cell and even his confessional: a veritable sacrilege! However, they claimed they were obeying orders coming from very high places.

Bias and injustice on the part of the visitors

The apostolic visitor, Msgr. Carlo Maccari, went into action on July 29, 1960. The first person he visited was Michele De Nittis, one of the canons of San Giovanni Rotondo



Brunatto investigated and denounced the detractors of his spiritual father, bringing their deplorable moral life out into the open

Emmanuele Brunatto and Padre Pio in 1924, in Santa Maria delle Grazie Monastery, San Giovanni Rotondo (Italy); inset, the book “The Antichrists in the Church of Christ”, published in 1932



Photos: Reproduction

who had savagely slandered Padre Pio in the 1920s.

While he continued his work, his assistant, Fr. Giovanni Barberini – the same who would later affirm that a blessing from the apostolic visitor was worth more than a thousand absolutions from Padre Pio – after having gone through the Capuchin’s entire portfolio and having found nothing that could serve to condemn him, spent his time in the bars and restaurants of the city.

The investigation was supposed to end on October 2, but both visitors left the convent on September 17. Despite the absence of any real motives, harsh restrictive measures were taken regarding the Saint’s contact with the faithful.

The “White Book”

On October 3 the Vatican published Msgr. Maccari’s stipulations regarding Padre Pio, which, it was claimed, were aimed at “protecting the Church from deleterious forms of fanaticism.”³ Condemnations followed one after another and everyone – especially Brunatto – feared that Padre Pio would be deposed from the governance of the hospital.

Putting himself at risk to defend his spiritual father, Emmanuele Brunatto sent a passionate letter to the Holy Office, in which he claimed to be ready to “turn the infernal cabal, which has already lasted for a third of a century, on its head if anyone touches Padre Pio’s liberty, or if modifications are made to the structure of his work [the hospital] without his and our consent.”⁴

In the meantime, the condemnations did not cease. Having no other alternative, he decided to make public the fact of the tape recorders placed in Padre Pio’s confessional. It was not long before a Cardinal of the Holy Office came to visit him in order to restore peace. They came to an agreement: Brunatto would cease the pub-



Emmanuele Brunatto at the end of his life

*The faithful disciple
was relentless in
defending the truth
and persecuting
the enemies of the
Church, and for this
he was as hated
as his master*

lications and they would keep Padre Pio in the governance of the hospital. Nevertheless, once again they did not keep their word: in the same month Padre Pio’s superiors obliged him to sign a document dispossessing him of the property.

As a last resort, Padre Pio’s advocate gathered all the documents he had accumulated from the 1920s until the 1960s and made a compilation, called the *White Book*. However, its publication was delayed due to the death of Pope John XXIII. Brunatto only sent a copy of the document to the UN Secretary General, the Presi-

dent of the Italian Republic and the new Pope, Paul VI.

In fact, it did not take long for the Pontiff to take the initiative to liberate the Capuchin Saint in 1964. However, since Brunatto was not aware of it, he felt obliged to publish his polemical work, which had enormous repercussions, above all among the ecclesiastical authorities gathered for the Second Vatican Council.

A mysterious death

A year later, on the night of February 9 to 10, 1965, Emmanuele Brunatto was found dead in his house, the victim, according to the authorities, of a heart attack. However, some of his companions raised other hypotheses, such as strychnine poisoning. It is worth mentioning that his dinner used to be bought every day in a nearby restaurant.

It goes without saying that this man, defender of the truth and persecutor of the enemies of the Church, came to be hated as much as Padre Pio himself, for in reality God was hated in them.

Yet, we know that as long as there are men on earth who are living representatives of God and integrity, they will always be the object of persecution and hatred by those who plot iniquity. And it is precisely for this reason that the Lord will never deprive His Church of the presence of “Emmanuele Brunattos”, persecutors of evil who know how to unmask, at the opportune moment, the enemies of truth. ✧

¹ The decree stated that the convent of San Giovanni Rotondo belonged to the Diocese of Foggia, but it was in fact part of the Archdiocese of Manfredonia.

² CHIRON, Yves. *Padre Pio: Le stigmatisé*. Paris: Perrin, 1999, p.202.

³ Idem, p.280.

⁴ Idem, p.290.

Precious Lessons from the Resurrection

Christ's glorious Resurrection is luminous with consoling joys, while offering important lessons for the faithful man, in the light of which he must orient his path towards his eternal happiness.



Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

In the three days during which Our Lord lay dead, all seemed irremediably lost in the eyes of those who had known Him, with the exception of Mary Most Holy. "He died!" they thought. "They have rolled a stone over the entrance to the sepulchre, and darkness envelops His Body. All is over; nothing more remains!"

In reality, everything remained. The history of man's salvation had just begun.

Unspeakable joy of the souls of the just

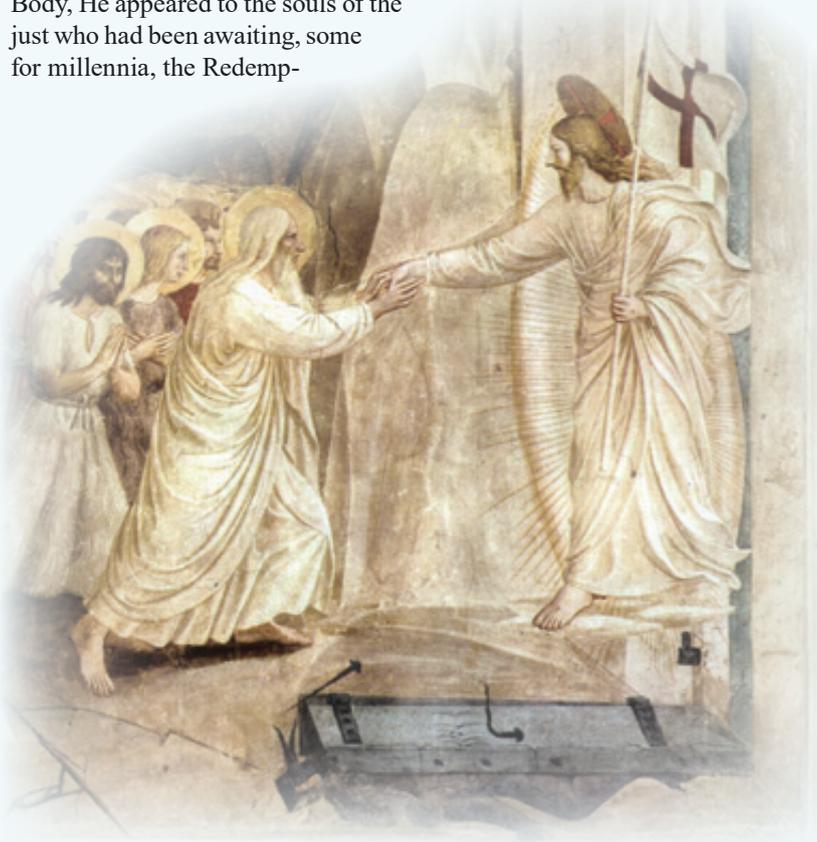
As soon as the Most Holy Soul of Our Lord separated from His Sacred Body, He appeared to the souls of the just who had been awaiting, some for millennia, the Redemp-

tion and the opening of the gates of Heaven.

Let us imagine, if we may, the unspeakable happiness of the souls of

*Upon being visited
by Our Risen
Lord, there was
unspeakable joy
among the just
who awaited
the Redemption
in Limbo*

"Christ in Limbo," by Fra Angelico - San Marco Museum, Florence (Italy)



Reproduction

Adam and Eve, upon realizing that the sin they had committed, the sin that had caused the decadence of the human race, was at last forgiven and their guilt redeemed! And we can likewise imagine the incomparable joy of so many other righteous souls, patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament gathered there, as they acclaimed the appearance of the One who was freeing them from that long wait.

This encounter must have been an extraordinary spectacle.

At the worst moments, refuge at the feet of Mary Most Holy

Nevertheless, this spiritual and glorious reality was completely unknown to the Apostles and disciples who had fled during the Passion. On the contrary, they were disheartened, crushed, horror-struck and failed to glimpse any way out of their tragic situation. Each one hid as best he could, hoping that the commotion of the recent events would die down and the normality of everyday life would help him to forget them.

But the designs of Providence were different. We may conjecture that a mysterious work of grace inspired within each of their souls the desire to seek Our Lady and to take shelter under her maternal mantle. At her side – we are always free to surmise – they remained weeping and contrite, still uncertain about the future. Only the Mother of God trusted and prayed, sure of her Divine Son’s triumph over death.

In a manner proper to supernatural things, the fidelity of Mary Most Holy began to affect the tepidity of the Apostles and to awaken, in each of their hearts, sensations, hopes and perceptions of the marvellous grace that lay in store for them. In the midst of the storms of trial, founda-



Salvo (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Our Risen Lord – Church of San Carlo of Lombardi, Florence (Italy)

Because they took refuge close Our Lady at the time of trial, the Apostles received special graces to believe in the Resurrection

tions of a new conviction and a new courage were laid in these men’s souls.

That is to say, at the worst moments, they received invaluable graces that prepared them for all that was about to happen, because they took refuge at Our Lady’s feet. United around the Virgin most Faithful, they were made ready to believe in the Resurrection and to open themselves to the great mission to which they had been called.

The most audacious hopes are confirmed

On the morning of the third day, the Divine Redeemer arises in glory and – as the belief of pious authors suggests, although the Gospels do not recount it – He appears first to Our Lady, inundating Her with consolation and happiness. He is entirely radiant, shedding heavenly light about Him like the brilliance of a thousand suns!

He next appears to Mary Magdalene and the other disciples. The Resurrection is already an incontestable fact. The Apostles believe and exult. All of the impasses in their paths were opened and all hopes, even the most daring, were confirmed in the triumph of the Risen Christ. It was a victory that represented at once the affirmation of His entire life and an immense pardon for His disciples.

This was the starting point of an authentic conversion. After several days, they would receive the infusion of the Holy Spirit, each one becoming a pillar of love and fidelity upon which the edifice of the Holy Roman Catholic Church would arise.

A faithful man does not let himself be cast down by setbacks

From the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ and from the aspects associated with it – those that

The Victory of the Immortal Church

The regularity with which the cycles of the liturgical year follow one another in the Church's calendar, unperturbed in their succession by the changing events of human history, as the ebb and flow of politics and finance continues its disorderly course, is an apt affirmation of the Church's heavenly majesty, far above the capricious fluctuations of human passions.

Far above, but not indifferent. When the sorrowful days of Holy Week unfold during peaceful and happy times in history, the Church, like a solicitous Mother, makes use of them to revive self-denial in her children, along with the sense of heroic suffering, the spirit of renunciation

of daily trivialities and entire commitment to worthy ideals that lend a higher meaning to human life. More than "a higher meaning," it is the only meaning that life has: the Christian meaning.

But the Church is not only a Mother when she teaches us the great austere mission of suffering. She is also Mother when, in the extremes of sorrow and annihilation, she makes the light of Christian hope shine in our sight, opening to us the serene horizons that the virtue of confidence places before the eyes of all true children of God.

Thus, even amid the infelicities of the contemporary context, Holy Church makes use of the vibrant and chaste joys of Easter to give us the triumphal certainty that God is the supreme Lord of all things, that His Christ is the King of Glory, who has conquered death and crushed the devil, that His Church is a Queen of immense majesty, capable of arising from any ruins, of dispelling every darkness and shining with the most brilliant triumph at the very moment when the most terrible, the most irremediable defeat seemed to await her.

The joy and sorrow of the soul inevitably stem from love. Man rejoices when he has what he loves, and grieves when what he loves is lacking.

Contemporary man pours out all his love into superficial things, and so he is only moved by events that play out on the surface – on that surface closest to his little person. Thus, he is primarily engrossed with his own personal and superficial misfortunes: his declining health, failing fi-

nances, ungrateful friends, overdue promotions, etc. But in fact, all of this is secondary for the true Catholic who is concerned before all else with the greater glory of God, and thus for the salvation of his own soul and the exaltation of the Church.

Therefore, the greatest suffering of the Catholic must be the present state of Holy Church.

Without a doubt, this situation offers many consolations. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to deny that the general apostasy of nations continues in a frightening crescendo; that the trend towards paganism is advancing vertiginously in those heretical or schismatic nations which still retain some remnants of Christian substance. In the Catholic ranks themselves, alongside a promising rebirth, one can observe the progressive march of neo-paganism: customs become depraved, families are limited, Protestant and spiritist sects abound.

Despite so many motives for sadness, motives which perhaps presage a catastrophe not far off for the whole world, Christian hope lives on. And the reason for this is taught to us by the very feast of Easter.

When Our Lord Jesus Christ died, the Jews sealed His tomb, stationed soldiers to guard it, and thought that everything was finished.

In their impiety, they denied that Our Lord was the Son of God, that He was able to destroy the sepulchral prison in which He lay, that He was, above all, able to pass from death to life. And yet all of this happened. Our Lord resurrected without any human aid, and the heavy stone of the tomb was removed at His command,



Our Lady of the Resurrection -
Tabor Formation House,
Caeiras (Brazil)

Javier Perez Beltran



The Resurrected Christ -
Cathedral of Santa Maria la Real,
Pamplona (Spain)

as lightly and swiftly as a cloud. And He arose.

Likewise, the immortal Church may appear to be abandoned, besmirched, persecuted. She may lie, seemingly defeated under the sepulchral weight of the most grievous trials. But within herself she has an interior and supernatural strength that comes from God, and that assures her of a victory whose splendour is commensurate with its unexpectedness and totality.

This is the great lesson of today, the great consolation for upright men who love God's Church above all else:

Christ died and rose again.

The immortal Church rises again from her trials, glorious like Christ, in the radiant dawn of His Resurrection. ✧

Taken from: Easter.
In: *Legionário*. São Paulo.
Year XVIII. No.660
(April 1, 1945); p.2

preceded it and those that followed – we can draw certain lessons.

The man moulded according to the spirit of the Divine Master, the man who responds to the graces obtained by Mary's entreaties, the faithful man who entirely obeys the will of God and whose soul is hewn by the doctrine of the Church, this man enjoys such an inner strength that no disaster, ruin or sadness, no persecution or misery can cast him down and deter him from his apostolic course.

On the contrary, the greater the setbacks, the greater his courage; the more unexpected and untimely the defeats, the greater his will to react; the more terrible the blows he receives, the greater his determination to keep on fighting.

And if he happens to fall prostrate in battle, God, who watches over him and his spiritual descendants, will see to it that disciples be born, from his example and his teaching, who continue his work. And so, from glory to glory, step by step, but from sorrow to sorrow, from suffering to suffering, it is possible to erect works of unimaginable magnitude and beauty.

But these works, born of suffering, fidelity, constancy and the complete gift of self so that God can carry out His will for humanity, are also born of devotion to Our Lady and union with Her, which brings us graces that are unspeakably powerful, profound and invigorating.

Joy that prepares us for new trials

Another lesson given us by Our Lord's triumph over death comes from the joyful celebrations that commemorate it.

The pomp of the splendid and brilliant Liturgy of the Easter Vigil and Resurrection Sunday tell us of all the legitimate and even glorious joys that a member of the faithful can enjoy in his life.

The greater the setbacks, the greater will be the courage of the faithful soul; the more terrible the blows he receives, the greater his determination to fight

Moreover, the mission and the labours of the converted Apostles teach us that there is no joy that leads the faithful man astray from the path of suffering; there is no happiness that makes him soft, that diverts him from the austerity with which he treads the path of Heaven. On the contrary, since this joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, man comes out of this day of celebration and glory better disposed to endure all the humiliations, all the sorrows and all the sacrifices necessary for the great salvation battle that lies before him.

For this reason, as we celebrate Easter, we must ask the risen Jesus, through Our Lady's mediation, for the strength of spirit needed so that no trial will lead us to despair, nor any glory to laxity.

Thus, following this path of sufferings that do not lead to discouragement and of triumphs that do not diminish our vigilance, we shall at last reach the imperishable glory of Heaven, by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and by the entreaties of Mary Most Holy, our Mother, to whose prayers we owe so much. ✧

Taken, with slight adaptations,
from: *Dr. Plinio*.
São Paulo. Year XI.
No.120 (March, 2008); p.18-21

The Jordan of Grace

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John...” These words, divinely inspired, seem to be renewed in every historical period. And so it was in the era that received the founder of the Lasallians.

Fernando Joaquim Costa Mesquita



Gustavo Kraij

Man's life is like the field grasses that flourish in the morning but wither away in the evening; its memory passes like a garment that is changed (cf. Ps 90:6; 102:26). But there are those who leave an indelible wake behind them, marking the centuries: the Saints. And among this glorious train of souls we find the founders, who perpetuate their memory in the spiritual sons and daughters who uphold fidelity to the original charism.

St. John Baptist de La Salle, founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, shines in history's firmament with this crown. His work, aimed at the education of the underprivileged social classes, evokes the outstanding degree of charity and humility that characterized him. By a tree's fruit, we can deduce the quality of the seed from which it sprang.

But the conditions under which a seed germinates is often marked with perils and untold sufferings. The parable of the sower, viewed from a different perspective, can serve to illus-

trate this aspect of the life of founders: they are all the word of God for their time, sown among men by the divine farmer; but growth entails struggles, renunciations and sacrifices. Often the seed does not fall directly on good soil, but has to face all the topographies destined for it by the Divine Master.

This was the case with St. John Baptist de La Salle and the work he founded.

France's Baptismal font, John Baptist's cradle

Among the many glories that the French city of Reims can claim is the fact that it witnessed the birth of a new John the Baptist on April 30, 1651.

This place, which had become the baptismal font of France when Clovis received his first of the Sacraments there around 498, and the mainstay of French faith when St. Joan of Arc saw Charles VII crowned there in 1429, also served as cradle to the man who would baptize countless French children “with the Holy Spir-

it” (Mk 1:8) in the troubled times that lay ahead.

John Baptist, the firstborn of Louis de La Salle and Nicolasa Moët, enjoyed a childhood that unfolded in the midst of an affectionate family, piety and study. A favourite pastime of this child was to build oratories and imitate the sacred rites, in a domestic atmosphere enveloped in the tenderness of his parents and the vivacity of siblings. As a student, he displayed brilliant capacity.

Canon of Rheims and theology student

The boy's prominence in the academic world opened to him the office of canon of Reims at an early age. On Easter Sunday, 1666, he had performed masterfully at a literature competition and awards ceremony held at his school. His eloquence had drawn the attention of the elderly Peter Dozet, secretary and canon of Reims, prompting him to cede his canonry to the Saint who was then only fifteen years of age, and had just received the tonsure.

It was a prestigious post, but a burdensome one. As a member of the Chapter, he was obliged to participate in choir prayer: three long periods of official prayer in the name of the Church. His condition as a student exempted him from this duty on most days, but not from attending the various administrative meetings, participating in processions and filling several other duties.

In 1670, three years into his canonicate, he entered the Parisian seminary of St. Sulpice and went on to study at Sorbonne University. John Baptist was following a steady course toward the priesthood for which he had longed since childhood, and a bright future. However, Divine Providence had other plans for him.

In the year following his move to the French capital, upsetting news arrived: in July 1671, his mother died, followed by her husband nine months later. John Baptist had to leave the seminary and take his studies back to Reims, where his status as firstborn obliged him care for his orphaned siblings.

There, besides the administration of the patrimony entrusted to him,

he continued his studies and received priestly ordination in 1678, in his home town.

A clearly discerned call

In that historical context, much of the clergy was contaminated by a certain tepidity and laxity in their apostolic motivation. They sought favour with the nobles and well-to-do, to the neglect of the humbler classes. As a result, entire multitudes of children were lacking any religious formation whatsoever.

On the other hand, a movement was now afoot in some French towns to found charity schools dedicated to

these little ones, especially the poor and orphaned. The man behind this initiative, Mr. Adrian Nyel, was headed for Reims, intent on organizing a similar establishment there. Hearing rumour of the young canon's virtue, he decided to seek his help.

Fr. de La Salle allied himself to this labour, but was not long in noticing his companion's superficial character. Nyel insisted on crisscrossing France in pursuit of new foundations without adequately securing those already begun.

That nascent work resembled a seed that fell by the wayside. Nyel was the bird who took it up and brought it to the ground chosen by God but then continued in free flight across the skies...

In the meantime, the Saint's profound spirit saw the need to provide the teachers with solid religious formation before launching into ventures that could not sustain themselves. From this motion of grace, and after much prayer, Fr. de La Salle began to draw up the first outlines of the daring enterprise that he perceived to be his vocation: the founding a Religious Order.

*Among the glories
of the city
of Rheims is that
of having smiled
upon the first
years of a new
St. John Baptist*

Cathedral of Rheims in 1722, by Pierre-Denis Martin - National Museum of the Castle of Versailles (France); previous page, St. John Baptist de La Salle - St. Peter's Basilica, Rome





Photos: LaSalle.org

St. John Baptist de La Salle distributes his goods among the poor, professes the vows together with the first brothers and receives the visit of the Archbishop of Rouen, by G. Gagliardi

His mission was to found an Order for the education of the poor classes; the seed fell on fertile ground and took root, thanks to the founder's zeal

Nevertheless, Providence did not yet wish to plant the seed in fertile soil. It would first have to begin its growth in stony ground...

The religious congregation is established

After a short period of community life with an emerging group of disciples, the first disagreements and dissatisfactions arose. It fell to the founder to sift through that group, realizing that many who had joined his project only sought to belong to a teaching body and had never so much as considered embracing a religious vocation.

But even after this purification, his followers still harboured a point of reticence regarding him: the Saint had invited them to live entirely in the hands of Providence, dependent on alms or the meagre profits the schools yielded, while he himself kept a prestigious social standing and received income pertaining to his canonicate.

When he perceived the problem, the Saint did not hesitate: he decided to renounce his position and patrimony, and to give all he had to the poor. Some advised him against it on the grounds that his income was one of the community's means of subsistence, but Fr. de La Salle placed his entire trust in God.

The internal cleansing and the founder's resignation marked a new phase for the establishment of a true religious congregation. That stony terrain had become fertile soil for the seed to begin germinating.

Expansion and persecutions

Once their characteristic habit had been instituted, the name Brothers of the Christian Schools had been defined, and the first rules had been established, the work began to expand rapidly, but at the price of great suffering. In fact, on emerging

from the soil, the sprout would only see the light through thorns. It would have to overcome them if the sap was to acquire vigour and stability.

As word spread about the existence of free schooling, lay teachers began to feel threatened. Some families who could barely afford to keep their children in the conventional learning establishments preferred to transfer them to the charity institutions, which meant an increasing loss to mainstream teachers. The problem generated several lawsuits against the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to which the founder had to patiently respond.

Meanwhile, the work advanced and developed: in 1691, two large-scale retreats were held; in 1692, the novitiate was founded; in 1694, the first profession of perpetual vows took place, and the rule was set and defined. The institution had taken the stature of an imposing religious congregation, but not everyone was pleased about it...

In 1702, there were a few cases of brothers applying over overly severe punishments to transgressing novices. Some members of the clergy who harboured hostility towards St. John Baptist de La Salle pounced on this, alleging the Saint to be the one responsible for ordering such penalties to be imposed.

Incited by these detractors, Cardinal Louis Antoine de Noailles made the decision to remove him from the office of superior and replace him with a priest unfamiliar with the foundational charism. The founder was informed that he was deposed, with the order to summon all the brothers of Paris to an assembly at which they would learn of the new measures.

On December 3, the spiritual sons of St. John Baptist de La Salle gathered, unaware of the terrible news they had been convoked to hear from the lips of the Cardinal's en-

voy. When the draconian decision was pronounced, they immediately raised a unanimous cry of indignation: “We have a superior freely chosen by us; we can accept none else [...]. If you wish to establish a superior, bring the subordinates as well; we withdraw.”¹

The brothers’ intransigence won the victory. The new superior was limited to an “external” capacity, similar to the role of a chaplain, and rendered powerless to alter the charism. The founder carried on as the effective superior.

However, in 1709 another ordeal began. The harsh winter had turned France’s humbler classes of into a mob of beggars, and the brothers were also affected: hunger gripped most of their communities and several brothers fell seriously ill. The grand novitiate, founded four years earlier in Saint-Yon, was unable to muster dignified living conditions and had to be transferred to Paris.

Final battles

In 1717, the second General Chapter was convened, in which the first Superior General – Br. Bartholomew – was officially nominated at the founder’s request, and the initial rule was revised. At that time, the community was reaching its maturity: “it had its own habit; it affirmed its lay state; the members professed three perpetual vows and there were suitable rules; the declared field of ecclesial apostolate was providing comprehensive education in the Christian schools; free education was considered indispensable; the community had an established hierarchy.”²

The founder would remain in recollection in Saint-Yon from then on, acting as confessor to the community and entirely obedient to the established superior. While his bodily health waned with each passing



St. John Baptist de La Salle, by Pierre Léger - La Salle Museum, Rome

He drank the bitter chalice of persecution until the end; the institution, watered with the blood of the founder, yeilded much more than a hundredfold

day, his soul likened him more and more to the Angels.

The seed was now well set in fertile ground, the stones had crumbled and the thorns had been overcome; but for the fruit to reach full size, the seed had to die...

Enroute to the summit of his calvary, in his debilitated physical state a few days before death, the Saint received an envoy from the local Archbishop informing him that he had been suspended from the use of holy

orders and was thereby even forbidden to hear the brothers’ Confessions. It does not seem unlikely that the measure was due to old or new calumnies... St. John Baptist de La Salle drank this bitter chalice without complaint.

On April 7, 1719, having received the Sacraments, he surrendered his soul to God only a few days short of his sixty-eighth birthday. The seed had utterly perished and from it would spring up a lush tree in the sacred garden of the Church.

The work “post mortem”

The saint’s glorification followed shortly upon his death: in 1724 the Brothers of the Christian Schools received civil sanction and, the following year, the pontifical approval so long desired by the founder during his lifetime, from the hands of Pope Benedict XIII. In 1888, Leo XIII beatified him, canonizing him in 1900. And, in 1950, Pius XII proclaimed him Patron of Educators.

Founded on firm rock and watered with the blood of its founder, the institute has produced much more than a hundredfold. After treading the most arduous paths – it was suppressed during the French Revolution, practically expelled from French territory in 1904, and lost the lives of 165 brothers to religious persecution in Spain – its members now number in the thousands, spread over five continents.

But countless are the souls who have found their way to Heaven through the work of the Lasallians – a true Jordan of grace, in whose waters a new John the Baptist glorified Christ. ✧

¹ GALLEGO, Saturnino. *Vida y pensamiento de San Juan Bautista de La Salle*. Madrid: BAC, 1986, v.I, p.362.

² Idem, p.552.

Conformism or Intransigence?

In the 8th century, the seed of future Catholic Spain languished under infidel yoke, but a handful of the faithful rose up against subjugation and changed the course of history.



Leticia Regina Ferratto

Conformism... A deplorable mentality at the root of so many disasters throughout history! It turned Lot's wife into a statue of salt (cf. Gn 19:26), it led Aaron to make a golden calf at the foot of Horeb (cf. Ex 32:1-6), it brought divine reproof upon the priest Heli (cf. 1 Sm 2:30-34), and it caused Solomon to fall headlong into idolatry (cf. 1 Kgs 11:1-8). However, such errors highlight an important truth: there can be no union between justice and iniquity, no fellowship between light and darkness, no compatibility between Christ and Belial (cf. 2 Cor 6:14b-15).

For, whoever consents to enter into accord with ungodliness soon sinks into the mire of the same vices. But those who, in the face of declared evil, raise their act of indignation to Heaven and are ready to fight for the triumph of virtue, become authentic heroes prepared to win, for God, the victory, honour, glory and power that He is worthy to receive (cf. Rv 5:12-13).

Owing to the infinite merits of the Most Precious Blood of Christ, many cries of non-conformity have also echoed down the centuries, to the delight and enthusiasm of the righteous. One of them came from what remained of future Spain in the 8th century: the Battle of Covadonga, whose 13th centenary we commemorate this year.

The Iberian Peninsula taken by the Moors

In 711, the Iberian Peninsula was at a critical juncture. The rivalries and disputes existing between its various kingdoms led some rulers to resort to the help of the Muslims who, in the impetus of their initial expansions, already dominated North Africa. Thus summoned, they crossed the Straits of Gibraltar without great difficulty, and soon began to seize cities as they went.

Conquest was rapid and easy. The Spanish nobles, blind and obstinate in their quarrels, "made agreements with [the invaders], opened the gates of the cities to them and placed large and rich territories in their hands. They naively imagined that Tariq [the Muslim general] would not stay long in Spain and that, once his craving for spoils had been satisfied, he would return to his land."¹ The result, however, was devastating: with the exception of a few Christian communities in the mountains of Asturias and near the Pyrenees, the whole peninsula was eventually annexed to the Islamic empire and subjugated through pillaging, arson and murder.

The reasons behind the Arabs' settling in those lands was not merely political. What they really wanted was to impose their own creed and societal system – at the point of the sword.

To do so, they did not delay in oppressing and even persecuting the Spanish Christians, who were reduced to oppressive conditions: although they could keep their religion, they were forbidden to build new churches, to preach the Faith, to engage in public worship, to bear arms... not to mention the obligatory payment of heavy tributes.

At this crossroads, many Spaniards denied their Faith and defected to Islam for the sake of convenience. Others remained Christians, but did not dare declare war on the impiety that had been established. Often, the prelates themselves prompted the Catholics to adapt to the new circumstances, thus goading their sheep to capitulation.

Nevertheless, in northern Spain, a handful of faithful, inflamed with holy intransigence, rose up to change the course of history!

First acts of resistance

They united two groups in this region, who were ready to confront Mohammedan dominion: the Goths, who had previously reigned in that territory and wished to recover their violated rights, and the local mountain folk, who were unwilling to accept the presence of the invading infidels and refused to pay the tax they levied.

Of course, these few men were incapable of facing the numerous, disciplined and well-trained Muslim troops. However, the spirit and daring of a man named Pelayo achieved the seemingly impossible.

Sparing no effort, he assembled the leaders of the region and showed them who their enemies were. He condemned the ignominious submission displayed until then and managed to instil courage in the Asturians, moving them to take up the fight. For his zeal, he was elected commander of the resistance.

As soon as they heard of his election, the Moors sent a mighty army against the Asturias under the command of Alkama. Don Pelayo, in turn, gathered his men and took refuge in Covadonga.

Trusting in heavenly aid

Located inside Mount Auseva, Covadonga was a kind of spacious, natural cave. According to ancient tradition, the place was dedicated to Our Lady since the time prior to Arab invasion, and its name is possibly a variation of the Latin expression *cova dominica*, or *cave of the Lady*. "There Pelayo withdrew with as many soldiers as could fit into that crude enclosure, positioning the rest of his men on the heights and in the forests that close and confine the valley watered by the River Deva, and there he calmly waited for the enemy."²

The choice of this battlefield was strategic for the Christian warriors. In the cave, they would be protected by the rocks and would have a sweeping view of their adversaries' movements. Moreover, the terrain before them was steep and almost impassable, and too narrow for all the enemy troops. It was the ideal place for ambush, Pelayo could clearly see, but Alkama and his men knew nothing.

The Christians were far from putting their trust in this advantage,

though. They were counting above all on the assistance of the Virgin Mary, whose protection would be decisive for the victory!

Miraculous victory

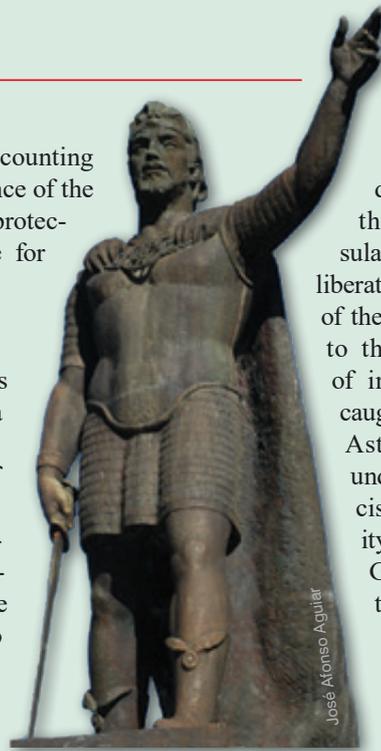
Due to the conditions of the terrain, Alkama only succeeded in bringing a limited number of troops to the cave, proportionate to the number of Don Pelayo's contingent. The rest of the troops were exposed to attack by the Christians lurking in the hills that flanked them...

No sooner had the battle begun than supernatural aid made itself felt: the arrows aimed at the cave struck the rocks and ricocheted back upon the bowmen! While this was taking place, the Christians hurled great stones and heavy tree trunks at the infidels from the hilltops.

The belief that God was fighting for them bolstered the courage and faith of the Asturians. They remained steadfast at their posts until the army of Alkama lost heart. The Arab general fled with his soldiers, many of whom fell victim to the Christians who sallied from the hillside passes existing in that narrow valley. The Muslim chronicles themselves detail the magnitude of the defeat their men suffered... For, in the end, victory belonged to God and to Our Lady!

The Reconquest had begun!

On that day, the Moors sustained their first setback in the Iberian Peninsula. After that, many other Spaniards resolved to join forces with Don Pelayo and, in that small region of Asturias, a staunch core of resistance to Islam was formed.



An act of fidelity obtained from God the reconquest of Spain

Don Pelayo - Shrine of Covadonga (Spain); on previous page, Our Lady's cave

Eight hundred years later, the entire peninsula would finally be liberated from the yoke of the Crescent, thanks to that first impulse of intransigence that caught fire among the Asturians. This was undoubtedly the decisive act of fidelity that obtained, for God and for Christendom, the reconquest of Spain.

"Save me, Holy Queen!"

The wisdom of the Church, which reaches out to sinners, seeking to draw them out of the

mire of sin and attract them to the path of truth, continuously invites us to love virtue and all its manifestations with a perfect charity and, consequently, to execrate evil with total radicality.

However, since we are conceived in original sin, it is understandable that we often feel the weight of sluggishness, indifference or laziness dragging us into conformism... Whenever this happens, let us have recourse to Mary's maternal aid: the true source of Don Pelayo's valour. She will not abandon us in our spiritual struggles! On the contrary, She will always be within audible range of a simple cry: "Save me, Holy Queen!" ✧

¹ MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ, Francisco; MARTÍN DE LA HOZ, José Carlos. *Historia de la Iglesia en España*. Madrid: Palabra, 2009, p.44.

² GRACIA NORIEGA, José Ignacio. *Don Pelayo, el rey de las montañas*. Madrid: La Esfera de los Libros, 2006, p.155.



Spiritual Composure

Whether recollecting herself to celebrate the Passion of the Lord or rejoicing in the Resurrection, Dona Lucilia helped to place those around her in a Catholic perspective of genuine equilibrium.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

Dona Lucilia's conformity with the spirit of the Church made her a loyal fulfiller of its religious practices. In those bygone days of the 1920s, still fragrant with the sweet aroma of St. Pius X's beneficial presence on the Pontifical Throne, she loved the sacral splendour with which the Liturgy imbued the solemn commemorations of the principal mysteries of the Faith. The faithful took part in these celebrations, whether by practicing the devotions recommended by the Church, or attending the divine offices. Dona Lucilia piously participated as far as her delicate health permitted.

But she did not limit herself to this. At home, she endeavoured to create an atmosphere in keeping with the feasts of the liturgical calendar. Such was the case with Good Friday and Easter.

“See how He is weeping for you”

During Holy Week, for instance, Catholic families traditionally draped their statues and crucifixes in purple, as in church. The children refrained from playing, and the adults from

amusements. Most people dressed in mourning and everyone spoke in low voices as a sign of sorrow for Our Lord Jesus Christ's Passion and Death.

Gathering the little ones around her, Dona Lucilia explained the stations of the Passion to them with all seriousness, helping them understand the dreadful consequences of sin. To move her young listeners to compassion for Our Lord, she showed them devotional pictures, and with words geared to a child's comprehension, she said:

“See how He is weeping for you. He is also weeping for others, because He suffered for everyone.”

On Good Friday she gathered all the family members of the household, and at three in the afternoon, she organized a prayer vigil before a crucifix she had inherited from her dear father.

Dona Lucilia opened the vigil by leading the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, followed by the Litany of Our Lady. Then she interceded for the souls of all deceased relatives; she did not forget a single one. These vocal prayers were alternated with silent prayer, during which everyone remained recollected. No one thought of leaving.

The vigil over, Dona Lucilia left the candle burning next to the crucifix until it was nearly consumed. On the following day, after a brief prayer, she wrapped the holy image of the Redeemer in silk paper and put it away in a drawer for the next year.

After the sombreness of Holy Week, starting from noon on Holy Saturday, the triumphant joys of the Resurrection began and she strove to have the children experience this joy. On street corners, boys could be seen carrying out the traditional scorning of Judas, in retaliation for his thousand-times-infamous betrayal of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Also on Holy Saturday, Dona Lucilia organized the following day's excursion and would always oversee the preparation of an assortment of treats and sweets for the children to enjoy.

*Easter Sunday
in Antarctica Park*

As the sun rose on the Easter Sunday of 1915 or 1916, the day promised to be one of innocence and happiness. It was the family custom every year to take the children to the park for an Easter picnic, and the night before Dona Lucilia had filled a wicker

hamper with Easter eggs, drinks, and sandwiches.

The front door of the Ribeiro dos Santos mansion opened, and, under the watchful eye of the governesses, a throng of children poured into several taxis, which carried them in a clamorous cavalcade through the tranquil streets of Campos Eliseos. Dona Lucilia would go along, adding a touch of watchful calmness. She generally chose Antarctica Park for the open-air revelry.

Arriving at the park, the children were at their liberty to run about the grounds, under the shade of towering trees. As the little ones dispersed, the governesses, following Dona Lucilia's instructions, hid the delicious sandwiches amidst the foliage – with fillings of Portuguese sardines, pork loin, ham and cheese with sliced hard-boiled egg – as well as the chocolate and sugar candy Easter eggs wrapped in silver foil. These hollow candy eggs were filled with a pleasant surprise of bonbons. When everything was ready, Dona Lucilia called the children to come and discover the goodies, and they happily came running.

The lively hunt began. Plinio, not an enthusiast of races, lagged behind, reasoning to himself: "Mama will know the way out." The others searched eagerly for the hidden delicacies, proclaiming their first discoveries with cries of glee. As Dona Lucilia watched the childish exuberance with pleasure, Plinio turned to her and asked:

"Tell me, Mama dear, where are they hidden?"

She lovingly answered:

"*Filhão*, you need to look for them!" [*Filhão* is the augmentative of *filho* – son, meaning, literally, "big son." Dona Lucilia frequently used it as a term of endearment for Dr. Plinio. –Trans.]

After a little while he insisted: "But, I don't see anything, Mama."

Then, looking toward one of the hiding spots, she said with a smile:

"*Filhão*, see what you find over there."

Confident that the maternal advice was setting him on the right path, he followed the direction of Dona Lucilia's eyes. She remained seated, watching him. If he did not manage to find the desired treats, she would go over to him.



The crucifix before which Dona Lucilia would gather the family on Good Fridays

Gathering the little ones around her, Dona Lucilia explained to them the steps of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ

In his usually emphatic way, he said again:

"Mama, I can't see those eggs! Please tell me where they are, because I am not finding them..."

Then she encouraged him:

"Keep looking! Look over there a little."

At last, Plinio discovered a collection of goodies – all of his favourites. Indeed, they had been hidden there especially for him. He hugged and kissed Dona Lucilia as a sign of filial gratitude, and then she affectionately bid him:

"Now go and play, my son."

A captivating aura of sublimity

Dona Lucilia's placid serenity amidst that innocent fun taught the children to seek joy only in those forms of pleasure that produce and maintain a stable, calm, moderate and cheerful well-being. This was not to be exchanged for anything that brought agitation, even if it offered a type of pseudo-joy.

She was opposed to all feverish or frantic ways. Her balanced temperament favoured this, being a veritable reflection of order, and always upright in its enjoyment.

As a result, her soul sought beautiful and marvellous things, creating an aura of sublimity around her. Witnesses from that time readily claim that there was a certain atmosphere in the room when Dona Lucilia was present, and that it changed completely when she left.

This explains why the children of the family cherished her company. ✦

Taken, with slight adaptations, from: *Dona Lucilia*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, p.193-197



Ubatuba



Ubatuba



Rio de Janeiro



Belo Horizonte

Mariana Ouimas

Fernando Bueno

Brazil – The solemn consecrations to Our Lady according to the method of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort are on the increase across this country, as a result of the course offered by Fr. Ricardo Basso, EP, on the Reconquest Catholic Formation Platform, of the Heralds of the Gospel. Above, the ceremonies held in Lumen Maris House, in Ubatuba (SP), in the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the old mother church of Rio de Janeiro; and the house of the Heralds in Belo Horizonte.



Mexico – More than five hundred people consecrated themselves to the Blessed Virgin in St. Jude Thaddeus Parish, in Mexico City, on February 19. The preparation for the Spanish-speaking faithful was made through the online course given by Fr. Manuel Rodríguez Sancho.

Photos: Juan Carlos Villagómez / Ronny Fischer



Photos: Jesse Arce / José Sánchez

Colombia – Numerous consecrations to Our Lady were held from February 19-20 in the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, in Tocancipá (left). Over the same weekend there was also a well-attended consecration ceremony in the chapel of the house of the Heralds of Medellín (right).



Madrid



Seville



Valencia



Oviedo



Cartagena

Photos: Eric Salas / Sara Mayo / Inácio Dorta

Spain – The main cities of this nation continue to welcome the ceremonies of consecration to the Mother of God. They unite faithful from all areas of the country, followers of the online course offered in Spanish. The photos feature the ceremonies held in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, in Madrid; in the Parish of Our Lady of La O, in Seville; in the Royal Parish of St. Michael and St. Sebastian, in Valencia; in the Chapel of Afonso II, the Chaste, in the Cathedral of Oviedo; and at St. Joseph House of Formation and Spirituality in Cartagena.

Photos: Leandro Sousa



Caieiras (SP) – On January 28, Most Rev. Benedito Beni dos Santos presided over the Holy Mass for the opening of the academic year for the Major Seminary of the Heralds of the Gospel, celebrated in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary. More than a hundred students participated in the liturgical act.

Marcelo Paulino da Silva / Maria Clara Goulart



Nova Friburgo (RJ) – At the request of Diocesan Bishop, Most Rev. Luiz Antônio Lopes Ricci, the Heralds participated in the commemoration for World Religion Day held in the cathedral (left). Days later, Fr. João Carlos Fidelis de Moura, EP, administered Confirmation for 20 members of the faithful in the Oratory of Our Lady of Fatima (centre and right).

Photos: Eduardo Injoque



Franco da Rocha (SP) – At the request of the mayor of the municipality, Dr. Nivaldo Santos, Fr. Aumir Scomparin, EP, and members of the Heralds of the Gospel distributed food supplies to families affected by the storm that destroyed many homes in mid-February.



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Guatemala – Visits with the statue of the Christ Child to the Margarita Cruz Ruiz Home during the Christmas novena (photo 1), evangelizing activities with children at the La Montaña Residence (photos 2 and 3), musical presentation at Villa of Guadalupe Parish (photo 4), and the visit with the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the migration sector of the National Air Forces (photo 5), are among some of the most recent activities carried out by the feminine sector of the Heralds of the Gospel in the country.



Ecuador – With enthusiasm, two sisters of the feminine sector were welcomed at the fondly remembered Apostolic Vicariate of Sucumbíos. Over several weeks they visited the homes of the region, carrying a statue of the Infant Jesus and a shrine of Our Lady of Fatima.

CHURCH AND WORLD EVENTS



Consecration of Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

In a statement released on February 24, the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ukraine, in response to the country's current situation, urged the clergy to pray the Act of Consecration of Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary after every Holy Mass.

In the document, the Ukrainian Bishops stress that this time of trial should be an opportunity for reconciliation with God, and they encourage the faithful to seek the Sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist more conscientiously, as well as to pray the Rosary together, pleading for divine protection.

Twenty-three priests ordained in Seoul

On 28 January, the Archdiocese of Seoul ordained twenty-three new priests, three of whom belong to the International Catholic Missionary Society of Seoul, an entity committed to sending missionaries to Latin America. Metropolitan Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-Taick OCD who presided at the celebration emphasized that this is a sure sign that the Church in Korea has become a "Church of giving," ready to assume a mission beyond its borders. The country thus progressed from evangelized to evangelizer.

South Korea is one of the Asian nations in which the Catholic Church has experienced greatest growth in this century, with an almost 50 per cent increase in the number of Catholics in the last twenty years, main-

ly due to adult conversions. Today the country has 5.6 million Catholics, representing 11 per cent of the population, a figure that in 1950 was only 1 per cent. This reality is reflected in the flourishing local clergy, most of whom are young, in contrast with the vocations crisis in the West.

facebook.com/diariocodpetropolis



Statue of Our Lady withstands landslides

Countless reports of natural or man-made disasters, including floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, fires, illnesses, attacks and wars, have alarmed the world in recent times. In this climate of distress, the gentle and protective presence of the Virgin Mary in her various invocations, has become more notable. Like a ray of hope, there are a growing number of instances in which statues of Mary remain intact in scenes of destruction.

One such episode occurred in February after heavy rains devastated the city of Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, causing floods and landslides that left more than 200 people dead. During the tragedy, the population found spiritual encouragement in the presence of a small shrine of Our Lady of Graces that remained intact in one of the neighbourhoods most heavily hit by the storm. The statue has been there since 1973 and residents believe that her presence averted a far worse disaster.

Frankfurt celebrates the feast of Charlemagne

On January 29, the traditional *Karlsamt*, a pontifical office in hon-

our of Charlemagne, was celebrated at St. Bartholomew's Cathedral in Frankfurt, once the site of coronation for German emperors. The ceremony takes place every year on the last Saturday of January, commemorating the anniversary of the monarch's death.

The office consists of the *Sequentia Sancti Karoli*, a Latin hymn dedicated to the Emperor, and the chant of *Lauds regia*, an IX century composition with supplications to Our Lord Jesus Christ for the Church, the Pope, the Bishop, the German people and their rulers, followed by a solemn Mass. A foreign Bishop or Cardinal is usually invited to preside over the celebration. This year, Archbishop Zbigniew Stankevičs, prelate of Riga in Latvia officiated.

Since 1176, Charlemagne has, with the permission of the Holy See, been venerated as Blessed in some cities in Germany, including Aachen and Osnabrück.



Karmel.pl

Discalced Carmelites decide to remain in Ukraine

The Discalced Carmelite nuns of the cities of Kiev and Kharkiv have embraced an admirable decision while war rages in Ukrainian territory. The General Curia of the Order announced through social media that the sisters would remain in their monasteries, and asked for prayers for them and for the Ukrainian people.

The nuns arrived in Ukraine in the 1990s to help through their prayer and presence in rebuilding Ukrain-

Isabel the Catholic Moves Closer to Beatification



Reproduction

Isabel of Castile, by Luis de Madrazo - Prado Museum, Madrid

The cause for beatification of Isabel the Catholic, Queen of Castile and a great promoter of the evangelization of the Americas, is underway for several decades now, having begun in 1958 in the Diocese of Valladolid, Spain, where the monarch died. Since then, over twenty volumes have been gathered with historical documentation and accounts of favours obtained through her intercession. In a recent declaration, Fr. José Luis Rubio Willen, responsible for the process, stated that her elevation to the honour of the altars may be near.

Fr. Willen's announcement came after the recognition by the Holy See of the

first miracle attributed to the queen. It involved the healing of a priest who was hospitalized and in coma, due to advanced pancreatic cancer. His family visited the tomb of the Catholic Kings in Granada, asking God for healing through Isabel, and the priest immediately recovered.

The Isabel the Catholic Commission, which is promoting the cause for beatification, continues to collect reports of graces obtained, such as the case of a young man from Rome who required surgery for lung cancer. His operation was cancelled due to a cure attributed to the queen's intervention.

ian society after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The Church gains another Doctor: St. Irenaeus of Lyon

The apostle of the Celts and Germans, and outstanding defender of Catholic doctrine, St. Irenaeus of Lyon, has received the title of Doctor of the Church, with the signed decree of January 21, conferring on him the title *Doctor Unitatis*.

Doctor of the Church is a title officially granted by the Catholic Church to certain Saints, recognizing them as eminent teachers of the Faith for the faithful of all times.

Originally from Asia Minor and a disciple of St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Irenaeus was Bishop of Lyon, France. In his writings, he clearly set forth the true doctrine and defended it against heretical attacks, especially those coming from Gnosticism, which threatened the Church in the second century. He died a martyr on June 28, 202, during the persecution of Emperor Severus.

Aparecida welcomes the pilgrimage of the Rosary for Men

Approximately twenty-five thousand pilgrims participated in the 14th National Pilgrimage of the Rosary

for Men to the Shrine of Aparecida, held from February 18-20. Most Rev. Gil Antônio Moreira, Archbishop of Juiz de Fora and the liaison from the CNBB for the movement, presided the opening Mass.

The central theme of the gathering was *Walking with Mary, to live and grow in community*, and its motto, *In the Mother's House we renew our missionary commitment*. For Glayson Lozer, an organizer of the event, praying under the mantle of Our Lady of Aparecida, so emblematic of faith in Brazil, leads men to better exercise their roles in the family and in society.



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

The Happiest Donkey in History

The little donkey's heart beat faster... One of the men of that retinue began to gently pull his rope in whatever direction the Master indicated. Now he felt more noble than any spirited steed!



Sr. Leticia de Sousa, EP

The ninth hour had already passed, and the sun still beat strongly upon the village of Bethphage, situated on the outskirts of Bethany. The entire region was in the grip of drought and famine...

The sons of the honest farmer, Bartholomew, were busy storing the hay in the barn and grinding the wheat that they had worked so hard to grow that year.

Mark, the youngest of the family, had the task of delivering the flour to buyers. He used to sing psalms as he merrily loaded his little donkey with the sacks.

The donkey was a young and sturdy colt, who had never been mounted by anyone. He obeyed faithfully and did his very best to carry even the heaviest loads.

That evening, the poor donkey was quite tired... After enjoying a well-deserved measure of feed and some water, he was just about to rest for the next day's labour.

"Goodness me! What a day! Lots of heavy loads to carry, donkey boy? What a hard life you have!" said the chatty hen.

"Yes ma'am! Am I ever tired!..."

No sooner had he finished the phrase than he felt the earth tremor beneath his hooves. A thick cloud of dust began to rise and Mama Hen cried out in despair:

"It must be the end of the world! I must hurry to gather all my little chicks under my wings! Farewell!"

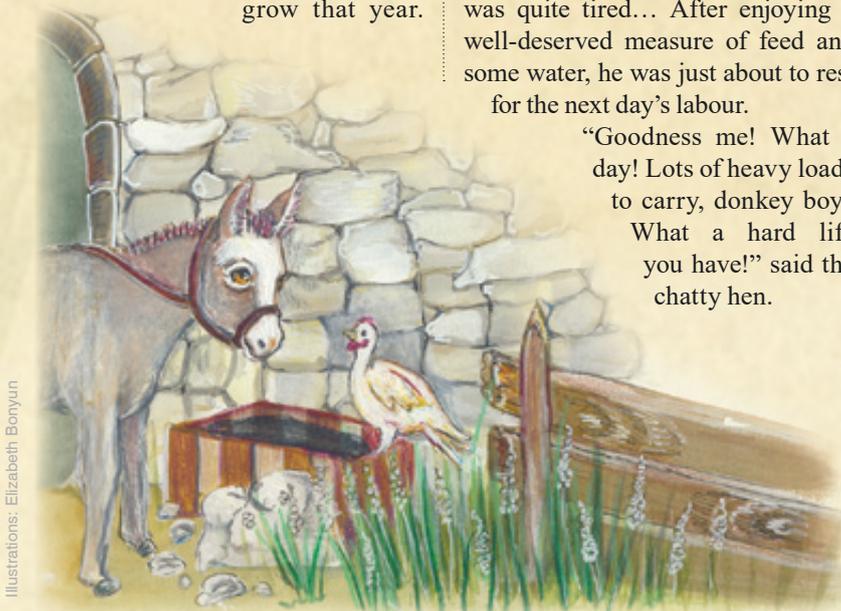
As she darted off, the donkey colt dug his hooves into the ground, held his breath, shut his eyes tight and braced himself for whatever was about to happen. Then he heard a bellowing voice ring out:

"Halt!"

A large troop, marching down the road in perfect step, had just stopped in straight files right in front of Bartholomew's house. When the dust settled, the donkey dared to open his eyes to see whether the world had actually ended... He was astonished to find what appeared to be a Roman legion on its way to Jerusalem. Amid that multitude of soldiers, he spotted some chariots pulled by strong and beautiful horses.

The young donkey tied to a post said to himself:

"Wow! What an honour it must be to pull those carts that carry such high



Illustrations: Elizabeth Bonyun

"Lots of heavy loads to carry? What a hard life you have!" said the hen

war officials! That commander looks so distinguished. What an important man! The Jewish folk all step aside to let him pass. Oh, how magnificent!”

Then, after a deep sigh, he mused: “Ah! If I were only a horse... And here I am, as much a donkey as ever. But God wanted it this way!”

That night, the poor creature dreamed about the glories of being a noble steed.

At the break of dawn, Mark took him out again to deliver flour-sacks. As he lumbered along, the donkey heard the sound of fifes and drums. A short while later, he caught sight of a group of oriental merchants. They had dozens of camels wearing rich trappings and laden with precious wares. The group filed past the lowly little donkey, who exclaimed in wonderment:

“Just look at those camels! Look how elegantly they are dressed! Their harnesses are made of gold and silver... How marvellous! They remind me of the ones my grandmother used to tell us about, mounted by three wise gentlemen from the East some thirty years ago! Ah, if only I, too, could be ridden by wealthy oriental merchants wearing colourful robes and turbans, transporting rare stones and fine silks! But here I am, tied to this post...”

Lost in thought, the donkey pondered:

“O my God and my Creator, how I would like to do something truly grand in my life! But I was born an ordinary donkey. May Thy will be done!”

And he carried on with his daily labour.

Later on, when he was finished his work for the day, there he was again, tied to the post by the door. But this time, two men suddenly walked up and begin to untie his rope without the slightest explanation.

“Oh dear, what is going to become of me now? Perhaps these people are so hungry that they’ve decided to eat donkey meat. If you’re hungry

enough, you could even make a meal of the likes of me! What am I to do?”

Then he sighed and added:

“May the will of God be done!!

When Mark, a short way off, saw the men about to take his beloved pack animal, he ran to stop them. But when he asked them why they were untying the colt, their mysterious response somehow set him at ease:

“The Lord has need of him right now, but will soon bring him back.”

Without any objection, Mark let them take the donkey, who allowed himself to be led away with quiet resignation.

After plodding a certain distance, he was brought to a stop before an imposing Man with a kindly manner. He opened his eyes wider for a better look and perked his long ears.

“This man is far superior to those Roman officials, and has no similarity with those merchants on top of those camels. Actually, I have never seen anyone quite like Him!”

To the donkey’s surprise, some people laid their cloaks on his back, and the man mounted him. It did not take long for the donkey to realize that he was being ridden by Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah awaited for centuries.

His heart began to beat faster... One of the men of that retinue began to gently pull his rope in whatever direction the Master indicated. The little donkey felt more noble than any spirited steed!

When they reached the gates of Jerusalem, they were met by a great crowd of people from all walks of life who were awaiting them anxiously. Some laid palm branches on the road; others waved them in the air to hail Jesus. They also spread their cloaks along the way so that the humble donkey might step on them.

“Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

As the capes and fine textiles were extended on the ground ahead of him, the donkey felt a thrill. But he knew that the glory was not his, but belonged to the Redeemer seated upon him.

When the procession finished, Our Lord dismounted and entered the Temple. At the day’s end, the donkey was returned to his owner, who once again tied him to the post. The rest of his life revolved around that one day of glory. He was the happiest animal in the world, for he had received the grace of bearing on his back the King of the universe. ✧



The rest of the little donkey’s life revolved around that one day of glory

THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

1. Blessed Hugh of Bonnevaux, abbot (†1194). Cistercian monk and nephew of St. Hugh of Grenoble; he was the broker of the treaty of Venice, which established peace between Pope Alexander III and Emperor Frederick I.

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

Blessed Mary of St. Joseph, virgin (†1967). She founded the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Maracay, Venezuela.

3. 5th Sunday of Lent.

St. Sixtus I, Pope (†128). Roman by birth, he was the sixth successor of St. Peter. He ruled the Church during the time of the Emperor Hadrian.

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

St. Gaetano Catanoso, priest (†1963). Parish priest of the former Archdiocese of Reggio Calabria, founder of the Congregation of the Daughters of Veronica of the Holy Face.



**St. Sixtus I -
Pontifical University of
St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome**

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

St. Juliana, virgin (†1258). Prioress of the Augustinian Monastery of Mont-Cornillon in Liège, Belgium, she promoted the introduction of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

6. Blessed Pierina Morosini, virgin and martyr (†1957). Lay woman killed at the age of twenty-six in defence of her virginity as she was returning home after a day's work.

7. St. John Baptist de La Salle, priest (†1719 Rouen - France).

Blessed Maria Assunta Pallotta, virgin (†1905). A religious of the Institute of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary, she died in Donggerkou, China, where she had carried out the humblest tasks with holy simplicity.

8. St. Agabus, prophet. Disciple of Jesus, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. He foresaw a great famine throughout the land (Acts 11:28) and the imprisonment of St. Paul on his return to Jerusalem (21:10-11).

9. St. Waltrude, religious (†688). Sister of St. Aldegundis, wife of St. Vincent Madelgaire and mother of four Saints. In agreement with her hus-

band, who became a monk, she entered a monastery that she herself founded.

10. Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.

St. Palladius, bishop (†658). Abbot of the Monastery of Saint-Germain, elected Bishop of Auxerre, France. He took part in several councils and strove to renew ecclesiastical discipline.

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

Blessed Elena Guerra, virgin (†1914). She founded the Congregation of the Oblates of the Holy Spirit in Lucca, Italy.

12. St. Julius I, Pope (†352). He tenaciously defended the principles of the Council of Nicaea during the Arian persecution and protected St. Athanasius against accusations, receiving him during his exile.

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

Blessed Ida of Boulogne, widow (†1113). Wife of Eustace II, Count of Boulogne, she piously educated her children, among whom was Godefroy de Bouillon. After her husband's death, she devoted herself entirely to works of piety and charity.

14. Holy Thursday. Institution of the Holy Eucharist.

St. Benedict of Avignon, layman (†1184). A young shepherd who, with God's help, built a bridge over the Rhône River in Avignon, France.

15. Good Friday.

St. Crescens of Myra, martyr (†date unknown). He suffered martyrdom by burning at the stake in Myra in Lycia, present-day Turkey.

16. Holy Saturday.

St. Engratia, virgin and martyr (†fourth century). A Christian of noble family, she was martyred for coming before the Roman magistrate in Saragossa to condemn the atrocities he had committed against her brothers and sisters in the Faith.

17. Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord.

Blessed Clare Gambacorta, abbess (†1419). Widowed as a young girl, and encouraged by St. Catherine of Siena, she founded the first Dominican monastery of strict observance in Pisa, Italy.

18. St. Giovanni Isauro, monk (†c. 842). A monk from the island of Aegina, Greece, he strongly defended the cult of holy images.

19. St. Bernard, penitent (†1182). To atone for the sins of his youth, he wandered tirelessly through the Holy Land, barefoot and eating very little. He died in the Monastery of Saint-Bertin, France.

20. St. Agnes of Montepulciano, virgin (†1317). Clothed as a consecrated virgin at the age of nine, she founded a Dominican monastery in Montepulciano. Her life is full of marvellous episodes, miracles and mystical graces.

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

St. Anastasius of Sinai, abbot (†c. 700). He was elected abbot of Mount Sinai Monastery, where he fought against Monophysitism and wrote several polemical and exegetical works.

22. St. Caius, Pope (†296). He escaped the persecution of Emperor Diocletian and died as a confessor of the Faith.

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

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

Blessed Teresa Maria of the Cross, virgin (†1910). Foundress of the Congregation of the Carmelites of St. Teresa in Tuscany, Italy.

24. 2nd Sunday of Easter. Divine Mercy Sunday.

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

St. Mary Elizabeth Heselblad, virgin (†1957). Religious of Swedish origin who died in Rome; she reformed the Order of St. Bridget.

25. St. Mark, Evangelist.

St. Peter of St. Joseph Betancur, religious (†1667). Religious of the Franciscan Third Order who dedicated himself to the care of orphans, beggars, the sick, abandoned youth and pilgrims in Antigua, Guatemala.

26. Our Lady of Good Counsel.

St. Richarius, priest (†645). A pagan from Celles, France, brought to the Christian Faith

through the instruction given by Irish missionaries. He founded a monastic community at Crécy, where he lived as a contemplative.

27. St. Zita, virgin (†1278). She distributed among the poor the little she could spare from her housemaid's salary. Her holiness was recognized during life.

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

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

Blessed Luchesius, layman (†1260). A wealthy merchant from Poggibonsi, Italy and contemporary of St. Francis of Assisi, he became a Franciscan tertiary and distributed his goods to the poor.



St. Juliana of Mont-Cornillon - Blessed Sacrament Church, Quebec City

Gustavo Krahl

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

St. Severus of Naples, bishop (†c. 409). Loved by St. Ambrose as a brother and by the church of Naples as a father.

30. St. Pius V, Pope (†1572 Rome).

Blessed Pauline von Mallinckrodt, virgin (†1881). Foundress of the Sisters of Christian Charity in Paderborn, Germany.

“Kintsugi” and the Art of Divine Pardon

Nowhere does God’s omnipotence shine so clearly as in the act of forgiving. Here we behold the mystery of the love of an infinite and eternal Being who, hearing the lamentation of a contrite heart, accomplishes the “impossible”.



Santiago Rodríguez

We live in a society that has become accustomed to the disposable, the practical and the ephemeral, and which is, as a consequence, increasingly unconcerned with beauty, the sublime and the enduring. For this reason, it may be difficult for us to appreciate a certain oriental art form, *kintsugi*, which aims to restore shattered objects in such a way as to enhance them, thus affirming that from the shards of a seemingly irreparable disaster, something superior can emerge.

The history of *kintsugi* – Japanese for gold joinery – dates back to the late 15th century, when the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa sent two of his favourite teacups to China to be repaired. The porcelain pieces came back restored, but with some metal clips that gave them a rustic and unsightly appearance. Displeased, he decided to commission the undertaking to Japanese craftsmen.

So magnificent was the work of these artists that, it is said, oriental

aristocrats would deliberately break precious porcelain pieces to have them renewed. Thus was born a ceramic restoration technique that became an art to span centuries.

The technique consists of joining the broken pieces with *urushi* lacquer – from the resin of the tree of that name – sprinkled with gold, silver or platinum powder. To apply the lacquer, a *kebo* or *makizutsu* brush is used. At the end of the process the piece has its original form, but is replete with shining scars.

Reflecting on this tradition, we can observe that certain pagan nations seem to intuit some metaphysical realities with greater acuity than those of the Christian West. This is no doubt so, with a view to preparing these peoples to welcome the revealed truth at some point in the future. It is indeed remarkable to find in the Far East a people so contemplative and transcendent, so endowed with a gift for metaphors, that they perceived in this form of restoration a reflection of a human process in the moral realm, and

founded an artisan school that has lasted to the present day.

Scars of a warrior

A number of principles come to the fore in *kintsugi*. Especially striking is that of the beauty of scars, something innate to a militarized society endowed with a keen sense of honour, which for centuries had as its highest model the archetypal figure of the samurai, a fearless warrior ready to sacrifice everything for his master.

The authentic warrior is never ashamed of battle scars. Something repulsive from a superficial aesthetic standpoint acquires a sublime beauty on a transcendent dimension, when analysed from the perspective of the metaphysical value of suffering for the sake of a lofty ideal.

However, there is something even higher represented in *kintsugi*, which touches on the Most High.

The Divine Craftsman

God is commonly represented as a craftsman modelling a clay vase,

the image of every human being. Since the Artist's skill is absolute, the good result of the work depends, in this case, on the docility of the clay in allowing itself to be moulded.

We can imagine this Divine Craftsman working with the poorest material and producing an exquisite piece of porcelain, adorned with beautiful figures drawn by the masterful brushstrokes of heavenly enamels. An incomparable vase has been produced – a work of art!

Let us suppose that this magnificent vase has a will of its own and decides to cast itself to the ground, shattering into a thousand pieces... Well, that is exactly what man, moulded by grace from the day of his Baptism, does when he decides to destroy the work of the Creator in his soul – whether on a whim or to satisfy his passions – and embraces sin.

How to reconstitute this vessel, reduced to shards so small that they could be mistaken for dust?

The omnipotence of divine pardon

Nowhere does God's omnipotence shine so clearly as in

the act of forgiveness. In it, we behold the mystery of the love of an infinite and eternal Being who, hearing the lamentation of a contrite heart that humbles itself and asks forgiveness, accomplishes the "impossible".

Infinitely more precious than gold, the Redeemer's Blood acts like a sacrosanct "resin" to unite the fragments of the poor vessel, and not only restores it, but gives it new lustre.

The soul restored by divine forgiveness retains scars, but these will be its glory and joy for all eternity because they will shine with the unmistakable light of one who has loved much for

having been forgiven much (cf. Lk 7:47).

It is wrong, therefore, to become discouraged and lose our peace when we sense our own misery, even if we have had the misfortune to commit a mortal sin. So magnificent is God's work in pouring out His pardon that the result, like that of the Japanese artisans, surpasses the original article. Hence we comprehend the often-repeated comment of Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias in his sermons: if by some absurdity we could sin without offending God, we would even wish to do so, just to receive His pardon!

This truth should fill us with invincible courage, especially when we consider that when it comes to the complete restoration of a soul,

God entrusts the work to the divine artisan, Mary Most Holy. Help and refuge of sinners, She applies the gold of her mercy even upon those who do not know how to ask for forgiveness. For this She imposes only one condition: that they abandon themselves entirely into her maternal hands. ✦



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Smithsonian Design Museum



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Porcelain ware reconstituted with the "kintsugi" method; in the background, designs from a Japanese vase from the Meiji era



Dona Lucilia on March 18 of 1968,
shortly before her death

Benevolence, Goodness and Affection

In the last months of Dona Lucilia's earthly life, there was visible manifestation of the gifts with which Providence had so generously adorned her childhood, and which she had made to so profusely blossom and bear fruit throughout her life.

It was easy to observe, in her beautiful soul, the practice of the virtues becoming second nature,

or an almost instinctive habit. Also very noticeable was her docility to the slightest breath of the Holy Spirit.

Her life was distinguished by benevolence, kindness, and affection; in short, by love of God above all things, and of her neighbour as herself.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP