

HERALDS THE GOSPEL



Vol. 16, No. 177
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*God's Plans
for History*





Marvellous Sanctity and Paternal Tenderness

The most painful adversity [for the spiritual sons of St. Ignatius] was to leave the house of Rome, where they were able to see their much-beloved Father General, to admire his marvellous sanctity, and to enjoy his paternal tenderness. They were so dearly loved by him that each might think himself to be the favourite child of his heart.

The veneration that the holy founder inspired in all his religious is explicable in view of how God seemed to take pleasure in justifying it. The good fathers collected everything from their holy General that they could manage to get their hands on. They divided his hair cuttings among themselves, scraps of paper on which he had written an order, no longer of use because it had already been carried out – anything that belonged to him or concerned him.

There existed in the Society, from the very first fathers of the foundation, a delightful and poetic belief that increased the tender veneration that the holy founder inspired in all his sons. [...]

Fr. Laynez, wanting to know the truth from him, took advantage of his former familiarity with Ignatius and of the trust he had always shown him, and made bold to ask him one day:

“Father, we are all convinced, and there is good reason to believe, that the dear soul of Your Reverence is entrusted to the guard of an Archangel. It is true?”

Ignatius of Loyola lowered his eyes, blushed like a criminal, did not respond and was left in the most painful embarrassment.

DAURIGNAC, J. M. S. “Santo Inácio de Loyola”.
2.ed. Rio de Janeiro: CDB, 2018, p.278; 298-300

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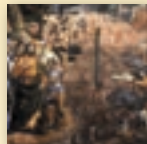
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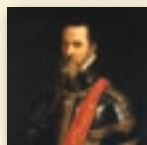
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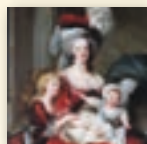
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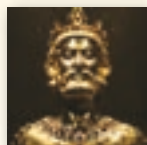
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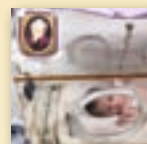
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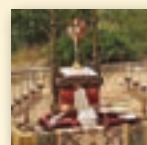
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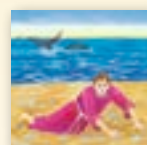
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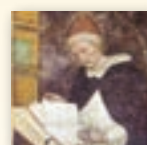
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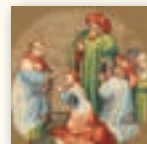
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OUR READERS WRITE

STORIES THAT TRANSFORM LIVES AND SAVE SOULS

What a beautiful story, *The Ptentious Candle*! So full of meaning and lessons! A story for children, for young people, for adults, for the elderly... No matter what age, it is certain that those who read this section will obtain guidance, grow more fervent in their Faith, learn more about our beloved Church, examine their conscience and gain many other spiritual and intellectual benefits. Despite its simplicity, this section can change lives, form the imagination and provide a new influx of perseverance on this journey.

I say all these things based on my own life experience... As a child, I used to count the days for the postman to arrive with the new edition of the magazine, just to read these stories. And when it arrived, what a joy! I would run straight to my mother or grandmother, so that they could carefully open the envelope containing the immense treasure. Twenty years later, I see how much joy these stories brought to my childhood, how they saved me from untold dangers during adolescence, served as a respite in my undergraduate years, a breath of fresh air while studying for my master's degree, and have sustained me every day. So I leave here my request: for the sake of charity, publish books with these wonderful stories; they transform lives and save souls!

Sofia Ximenes Lopes
Via revista.arantos.org

SOLID CONTENT AND CONFORMITY TO TRUTH

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Many thanks! May God reward you for the magazine. We deeply appreciate your articles, and the content is solid and in conformity to Truth. We keep you all in our prayers

Carmelite Sisters of St. Joseph
St. Agatha — Canada

SLAVERY OF LOVE TO MARY EXPLAINED AND LIVED

Having read, in the May 2022 issue, the article on the sacred slavery of love as taught by St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort in his book *The Secret of Mary*, we can, thanks to the magazine, understand that this is the most perfect of devotions. Mary is the link that unites us perfectly to Our Lord Jesus Christ and, in fact, this is a slavery of love, since it leads us to give ourselves without reserve.

The Heralds of the Gospel do this as well, for, with their exemplary interior life, they motivate us to grow constantly in our union with Mary Most Holy. And thanks to the doctrine so well explained in the articles, they influence the faithful to have a true Marian devotion, which manifests itself in a life of piety in which we have Mary always living and reigning in our souls.

Ximena Zapata
Via revista.arantos.org

PERSONIFICATION OF THE PROPHECIES OF FATIMA

Regarding the article *A Message Received with Love and Devotion*, in the May issue of the magazine, it is impressive to see how Divine Providence acts: in Portugal the prophecy was announced and, in Brazil, this prophecy was personified in a boy. This explains why Dr. Plinio was so persecuted, in all spheres, during his life; and, as a legacy, his spiritual children are currently persecuted

by the hosts of the evil one. What the adversaries of Our Lady fear most is the complete fulfilment of the Fatima prophecies. Let us pray, then, that they may be realized as soon as possible!

Elisangela Somavilla Navarro
Via revista.arantos.org

"KINTSUGI" AND GOD'S PARDON

The article relating the ancient technique of *Kintsugi* and God's pardon in the April issue is sublime! The article makes us see how, despite our own shortcomings, wounds and sins, we can turn to the Most High, asking forgiveness for them. From that moment on, we need no longer hide our weaknesses with shame, but they become the scars of a warrior who, after his fall, has got back to his feet and returned to the fight! Just as broken porcelain that seemed destined to be thrown away is "adorned" by the restoring lacquer, so our souls are repaired, but with an additional brilliance. As a curiosity: the Japanese proudly display these pieces, in which the breakage and repair constitute their "particular history" in the home. Congratulations!

Francisco Fernández
Via revista.arantos.org

"THE PRICE OF INTEGRITY"

Reading the article on Blessed Margaret Pole, *The Price of Integrity*, I ask: how many are willing to pay that price? Very few. To be honest, the only ones I have seen so far who witness to the truth and pay a very high price for it are the Heralds of the Gospel. It is impressive to see how they want to live the Catholic Faith in its totality, even if they are persecuted and ridiculed. I can only thank them for their witness to the truth!

Jurandir Barbosa
Via revista.arantos.org

PROVIDENTIAL MEN AND THE KEY OF HISTORY

Being essentially communicative, the Supreme Good wanted to extend His benefits to the whole universe, in an act of pure love. We know from Revelation that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gn 1:1), giving birth to temporal history, written in what could be called the “book of creatures”, whose author is God Himself and whose chapters are the various historical phases.

Leafing through the pages of this work and comparing its plot with a literary genre, we would find it very far from the flowery narratives, and closer to the epic ones. What dramatic story can be compared to that of Adam and Eve after their sin, that of flood or of the tower of Babel? What tales of heroism resemble the exploits of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon or Samson?

There is, however, a central axis in this divine epic poem: Jesus Christ. Through this “First-born of all creation” (Col 1:15), the veils of human limitations were swept away and some flashes of the mysterious plans of Providence could be contemplated.

We know that the universe came from God’s hands and will return to Him, for the Lord attests: “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Rv 22:13). However, just as Sacred Scripture has infinite hermeneutical layers, so too does the “book of creatures”. Faced with these sacred “manuscripts”, we are illiterate in discerning the deepest meanings of historical events.

It is certain, as Benedict XVI has pointed out, that the witness of the Saints constitutes the best explanation for the Gospels and consequently for history itself, by palpably manifesting the light of God in the course of events.

Thus, St. Augustine communicated this light in the midst of heresies, St. Benedict radiated it throughout Europe, which was still barbaric, St. Dominic of Guzman transmitted it as the Word of God, St. Francis of Assisi manifested it in the fight against the materialism of his time and St. Thomas Aquinas, like a beacon, scattered the darkness of false doctrines of the future. At times, scintillations of this light have even shone in certain souls who, while not entirely corresponding to the plan that Providence had traced out for them, fulfilled to some extent the historic mission that was theirs on earth.

In this way, even if one traverses an avenue of dead ends – an expression coined by Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira – there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. A cogent example shines in the epic of St. Joan of Arc, whose vocation was analogous to that of the great providential men of the Old Testament. Her persecutors, on the other hand, were expelled from History, as the case of Jean d’Estivet, her prosecutor attests: he was found dead in the sewers near Rouen...

In sum, if the Saints are a privileged way for God to intervene in history, the most perfect way was manifested only in the holiest of creatures: Our Lady. Through Her the Saviour came into the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and upon the world. Through Her great apparitions occurred, such as those of Lourdes, La Salette and Fatima. Finally, by her heel the race of the Serpent is constantly crushed. Therefore, we can conclude that Mary Most Holy is the key of history. And only Providence knows when it will turn again... ✧



*The Blessed
Trinity, “The
Grandes Heures of
Anne of Brittany” -
National Library
of France, Paris*

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The “Great Hallel” and Salvation History

Psalm 136 unfolds in the form of a litany, marked by the antiphonal refrain: “for His steadfast love endures for ever.” The many wonders God has worked in human history are enumerated all along the composition.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, today I would like to meditate with you on a Psalm that sums up the entire history of salvation recorded in the Old Testament. It is a great hymn of praise that celebrates the Lord in the multiple, repeated expressions of His goodness throughout human history: it is Psalm 136, or 135 according to the Greco-Latin tradition.

A solemn prayer of thanksgiving, known as the *Great Hallel*, this Psalm is traditionally sung at the end of the Jewish Passover meal and was probably also prayed by Jesus at the Last Supper celebrated with His disciples. In fact, the annotation of the Evangelists, “and when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (cf. Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26), would seem to allude to it.

The horizon of praise thus appears to illumine the difficult path to Golgotha. The whole of Psalm 136 unfolds in the form of a litany, marked by the antiphonal refrain: “for His steadfast love endures for ever”. The many wonders God has worked in human history, and His continuous intervention on behalf of His people are enumerated all along the composition. [...]

God’s first manifestations in history

After a triple invitation to give thanks to God as sovereign (cf. v.1-3), the Lord is celebrated as the One who works “great wonders” (v.4), the first of which is the Creation: the heavens, the earth, the heavenly bodies (cf. v.5-9). The created world is not merely a scenario into which God’s saving action is inserted, rather it is the very beginning of that marvellous action. [...]

Nothing is said here of the creation of human beings but they are ever present; the sun and the moon are for them, so as to structure human time, setting it in relation to the Creator, especially by denoting the liturgical seasons.

And it is precisely the Feast of the Passover that is immediately evoked, when, passing to God’s manifestation of Himself in history, the great event of the exodus, freedom from slavery in Egypt begins, whose most significant elements are outlined: The liberation from Egypt begins with the plague of killing the Egyptian firstborn, the exodus from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the journey through the desert to the entry into the Promised Land (cf. v.10-20).

This is the very first moment of Israel’s history; God intervened

powerfully to lead His people to freedom; through Moses, His envoy, He asserted Himself before Pharaoh, revealing Himself in His full grandeur and at last broke down the resistance of the Egyptians with the terrible plague of the death of the firstborn. Israel could thus leave the country of slavery taking with it the gold of its oppressors (cf. Ex 12:35-36) and “boldly” (Ex 14:8), in the exulting sign of victory. At the Red Sea, too, the Lord acted with merciful power. [...]

The might of the Lord overcame the danger of the forces of nature and of these soldiers deployed in battle array by men: the sea, which seemed to bar the way of the People of God, let Israel cross on dry ground and then swept over the Egyptians, submerging them. Thus the full salvific force of the Lord’s “mighty hand, and an outstretched arm” (cf. Dt 5:15; 7:19; 26:8) was demonstrated: the unjust oppressor was vanquished, engulfed by the waters, while the people of God “passed through the midst,” continuing on their way to freedom.

The fulfilment of the promise

Our Psalm now refers to this journey, recalling in one short phrase Is-

rael's long pilgrimage toward the Promised Land: He "led His people through the wilderness, for His steadfast love endures for ever" (v.16). These few words refer to a 40-year experience, a crucial period for Israel which in letting itself be guided by the Lord learned to live in faith, obedience and docility to God's Law. These were difficult years, marked by hardship in the desert, but also happy years, trusting in the Lord with filial trust. [...]

So as the "great wonders" that our Psalm lists unfold, we reach the moment of the conclusive gift, the fulfilment of the divine promise made to the Fathers: "gave their land as a heritage, for His steadfast love endures for ever; a heritage to Israel His servant, for His steadfast love endures for ever" (v.21-22). [...]

God in our history

We can of course say: this liberation from Egypt, the time in the desert, the entry into the Holy Land and all the other subsequent problems are very remote from us; they are not part of our own history. Yet we must be attentive to the fundamental structure of this prayer. The basic structure is that Israel remembers the Lord's goodness. In this history dark

valleys, arduous journeys and death succeed one another, but Israel recalls that God was good and can survive in this dark valley, in this valley of death, because it remembers.

It remembers the Lord's goodness and His power; His mercy is effective for ever. And this is also important for us: to remember the Lord's goodness. Memory strongly sustains hope. Memory tells us: God exists, God is good, His mercy endures for ever. So it is that memory unfolds, even in the darkest day or time, showing the way towards the future. It represents "great lights" and is our guiding star.

We too have memories of goodness, of God's merciful love that endures for ever. Israel's history is a for-

*In times of difficulty
and in the dark
valleys of our
history, we do as
the Israelites did,
and remember the
goodness of the Lord*

mer memory for us, too, of how God revealed Himself, how He created a people of His own. Then God became man, one of us: He lived with us, He suffered with us, He died for us. He stays with us in the Sacrament and in the Word. It is a history, a memory of God's goodness that assures us of His goodness: His love endures for ever. And then, in these two thousand years of the Church's history there is always, again and again, the Lord's goodness. After the dark period of the Nazi and Communist persecution, God set us free, He showed that He is good, that He is powerful, that His mercy endures for ever.

And, as in our common, collective history, this memory of God's goodness is present; it helps us and becomes for us a star of hope so that each one also has his or her personal story of salvation. We must truly treasure this story, and in order to trust, we must keep ever present in our mind the memory of the great things He has also worked in my life: His mercy endures for ever. And if to-day I am immersed in the dark night, tomorrow He sets me free, for His mercy is eternal. ✧

Excerpts from: BENEDICT XVI.
General Audience, 19/10/2011



"The crossing of the Red Sea", by Cosimo Rosselli - Vatican Museums

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Mary: God's Brilliant Response

Mount Carmel symbolically harmonizes the pinnacle of the divine response to evil and unshakeable faith in the fulfilment of the sweetest and most sublime promise: the Incarnation of the Word in the most pure womb of Mary ever-Virgin.



Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I – MOUNT OF WRATH AND OF HOPE

Mount Carmel, which lends its name to the Marian devotion celebrated on July 16, witnessed great events involving St. Elijah.

The first of them occurred when the fiery prophet purified Israel from the sin of idolatry after challenging the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, introduced among the chosen people by Jezebel, the pagan wife of King Ahab.

*Paradigm of exemplary punishment,
symbol of Israel's hope*

Challenged by God's envoy to offer a sacrifice to Baal that would be consumed by fire without human intervention, the false priests and prophets went unheeded by their idol despite their ludicrous supplications, songs and self-inflicted wounds, and the bull they had prepared remained intact. Elijah's prayer, however, simple but full of faith and ardour, immediately brought down fire from Heaven that consumed the holocaust, the wood, the stones and even the water that had been poured over the victim, filling the trench dug around the improvised altar (cf. 1 Kgs 18:15-40).

Before this spectacle, the people unanimously acclaimed Yahweh as the true and only God and, under the command of Elijah, put the impostors to death. Israel returned to the Lord; they no longer limped with two opinions (cf. 1

Kgs 18:21), persisting in an eclectic and polytheistic cult, an abomination in the sight of the Most High.

It was also on the heights of Carmel that Elijah saw the little cloud the size of the palm of his hand, which presaged a generous rainfall after three and a half years of drought (cf. 1 Kgs 18:44). Tradition sees in this fact a prophetic sign of the Redemption: after centuries of drought due to the scarcity of grace among men, the Blessed Virgin Mary, like a cloud laden with blessings, would bring abundant life to the earth by giving birth to the Saviour of the world.

Origin of the Order of Carmel

Nine hundred years before Christ, St. Elijah dwelt in one of the more than a thousand caves on the same mountain, surrounded by other prophets, his disciples. Centuries later, in keeping with this blessed tradition, some pious crusaders dedicated their lives there to recollection and mortification under the special protection of Our Lady, to whom they erected a much-visited shrine.

The founder of the first Carmelite community was St. Berthold of Malifaye, a warrior of French origin who gathered around himself some hermits scattered in El Hader, a region situated to the north of the mountain, near Haifa. At the dawn of the 13th century, St. Brocard, his successor, asked the Patriarch of Jeru-

*The origin
of the Order
of Carmel
goes back to
the prophet
Elijah,
giving it a
nearly three-
millennia
history in
God's service*

GOSPEL

⁴⁶ While Jesus was speaking to the crowds, His Mother and His brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with Him. ⁴⁷ Someone told Him, "Your Mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with You." ⁴⁸ But He said in reply to the one who told Him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt 12:46-50).

Our Lady of Carmel - Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (São Paulo); in background, aerial view of Mount Carmel (Israel)

salem for approval of the Order and for rules that would shape the life of solitude, asceticism and prayer of its members. This is the origin of the Carmelite rule, still in force today.

Following its pontifical approval, some members of the Order moved West, on account of the instability of Catholic dominion in the Holy Land. In Europe, the people of God received the venerable hermits as a gift from Heaven and adopted the custom of calling them Brothers of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel. However, some princes and clerics were ill-disposed towards the Carmelites, initiating a terrible persecution against them.

The scapular, sign of Marian predilection

Alarmed by the risk to the Order's future, its ninth Superior General, St. Simon Stock, turned to the Patroness of the community to implore her special protection and a pledge of her benevo-

lence. Here are the words of the hymn he composed to beseech the kind Lady to assist them with tokens of her love: "Flower of Carmel, tall vine blossom laden; splendour of Heaven, child-bearing yet maiden. None equals Thee. Mother so tender, who no man didst know, on Carmel's children thy favours bestow."

His ardent prayers were answered. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him accompanied by angelic legions, bearing in her blessed hands the Scapular of the Order. And Our Lady promised eternal salvation to those who would wear it with authentic piety. With the passing of the centuries, this Marian devotion became as universal as the Church herself, and the scapular came to be worn by a great number of Catholics as a sign of submission, reverence and affection for our Mother, the Co-Redemptrix. Thus, from the heights of Mount Carmel, Marian blessings spread over the face of the earth.

Mount Carmel evokes grandiose events, linked to the divine promises for the Chosen People and the world.

Is it possible to harmonize Marian tenderness, represented by the scapular, with the fiery combativeness of Elijah?

Vengeance and benevolence: can they be harmonized?

In the light of this story, as real as it is admirable, one might ask: why did Providence, in His infinite wisdom, wish to combine the most tender of devotions with a mountain indelibly branded by divine vengeance? Does this not seem contradictory? How can the vengeful zeal of Elijah be reconciled with the incomparable sweetness of the Virgin?

In his *Summa Theologiæ*, St. Thomas Aquinas sets out the characteristics of a forgotten virtue: holy vengeance. Yes, dear reader, when rightfully exercised – this is the crucial point – vengeance is an evangelical virtue, of which Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself gave us example. Therefore, it should be considered as sister of the other virtues and harmonious with them. But in what does it consist?

The Angelic Doctor explains that vengeance is not in itself bad or unjust. He bases this assertion on the fact that the Most High, always good and just, also takes vengeance, as the Scriptures affirm: “But we are to look to God for vengeance on His enemies: for it is written (Lk 18:7): ‘Will not God revenge His elect who cry to Him day and night?’ as if to say: ‘He will indeed.’”¹

St. Thomas shows the importance of the intentions of the one exacting vengeance. If he seeks evil for the sinner out of personal hatred, and not to remedy the effects of his fault, vengeance is evil and illicit. “If, however, the avenger’s objective be directed chiefly to some good, to be obtained by means of the punishment of the person who has sinned (for instance that the sinner may amend, or at least that he may be restrained and others be not disturbed, that justice may be upheld, and God honoured), then vengeance may be lawful.”² Therefore, “vengeance is lawful and virtuous so far as it tends to the prevention of evil.”³

Moreover, the virtue of vengeance is not opposed to patience in suffering wrongs, but is in keeping with it: “The good bear with the wick-

ed by enduring patiently, and in due manner, the wrongs they themselves receive from them: but they do not bear with them as to endure the wrongs they inflict on God and their neighbour. For Chrysostom says: ‘It is praiseworthy to be patient under our own wrongs, but to overlook God’s wrongs is most wicked.’”⁴

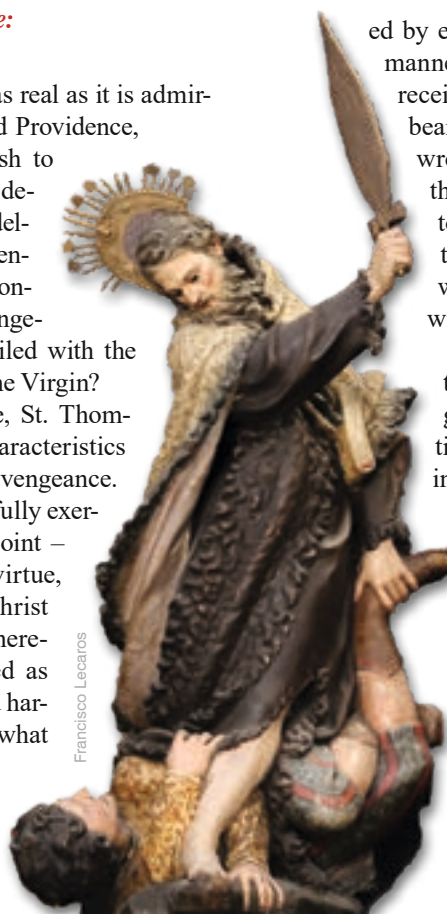
St. Thomas⁵ further identifies the relationship between vengeance and the virtues of fortitude and zeal, the latter being the daughter of charity. Fortitude predisposes to vengeance, removing from the soul the fear of imminent danger. Zeal, since it implies the fervour of love, gives origin to vengeance for injuries committed against God and neighbour, considered as one’s own.

Vengeance, in turn, has two opposite vices. The first, by excess, is cruelty, as immoderation in punishment; the other, by defect, consists in being too remiss in the application of due punishment, as the Book of Proverbs warns:

“He who spares the rod hates his son” (13:24).⁶

On reading these lines, some readers may jump to the conclusion that the present article is intended to exalt some kind of human revenge. Nothing could be further from reality, since this kind of vengeance is always liable to manifest the misery of the disordered passions so common to our fallen nature. The aim is rather to emphasize the beauty of a vengeance that, by its very essence, is invariably perfect and balanced: that which God wields against His enemies. And its faithful reflection is found in the most exalted of creatures.

Understood in this way, vengeance has its dwelling-place in the Wise and Immaculate Heart of Mary, as indeed does every other virtue. Although She is the Mother of all sweetness and gentleness, Our Lady acts promptly and forcefully when circumstances demand it. The greatest victories of Christendom have been obtained through her intercession, and this is why



Francisco Lecaros

St. Elijah exterminates a priest of Baal - Church of St. John of the Cross, Alba de Tormes (Spain)

the Church proclaims Her as the most implacable and effective enemy of those who rise up against the Faith: “The Virgin Mary, the loving Mother of God, by her offspring has crushed the head of the wicked Serpent, and has single-handedly destroyed all heresies.”⁷

Contemplated in her unique sanctity and in her providential mission as Mother Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix, Our Lady is God’s most beautiful act of vengeance against evil, the devil and sin. Let us see why.

II – THE HIGHEST MEANING OF THE DIVINE MOTHERHOOD

In Chapter 12 of St. Matthew’s Gospel, Our Lord manifests the divine grandeur of His Person to His disciples and to Public Opinion at large. Amidst a profusion of miracles and controversies with the Pharisees over His exorcisms, the Redeemer denounces the sin of that wicked and adulterous generation: “The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (12:41-42).

In this passage, as part of the unsurpassable didactics Jesus uses to progressively reveal His real identity as God Incarnate to the people, He wisely and persistently affirms His superiority over the great figures of the past, while pointing out, with severity and rigour, the gravity of the sin of rejection committed by the Pharisees.

It is in this context that the visit of the Blessed Virgin and some of her relatives, presented in today’s Liturgy, takes place. This is a bold step the Divine Master takes towards manifesting the Eternal Father and His own eternal filiation, as well as the participation in this filiation of all those who, with authentic faith, place their trust in the Messiah.

A sublime, but unknown bond

⁴⁶ While Jesus was speaking to the crowds, His Mother and His brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with Him. ⁴⁷ Someone told Him, “Your Mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with You.”

From the beginning, the venerable tradition of the Church has based all the privileges of Our Lady on her Divine Motherhood, debated and dogmatically declared at the Council of Ephesus. The Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God and not of a mere man, which confers on Her a singular relationship with the Word made flesh, to the point that eminent theologians consider her participation on the hypostatic plane. Her maternity is therefore both natural and supernatural, and the latter aspect infinitely surpasses the former, although the two are inseparable.

Nevertheless, the crowds who followed Our Lord were ignorant of this sublime reality, because they did not yet see the Saviour’s divinity with the clarity of faith. For the public, this respectable Lady was only Jesus’ parent considered strictly in His humanity. When the Evangelist mentions “His Mother and His brothers,” he evokes this earthly outlook of the audience.

Although the relatives of Jesus did not always adhere with full conviction to His doctrine and way of acting, the fact that they appear in this scene accompanied by Our Lady suggests that they were moved by an action of grace. The occasion was therefore propitious to reveal the existence of a new family in the supernatural order, which would constitute God’s vengeance against the sins of successive Hebrew generations in the line of promoting false notions of a sterile nationalism, detached from faith. In fact, the Pharisees placed their hope in the human filiation of the Jews in relation to Abraham, as well as in circumcision as a carnal rite, but they did not want to imitate the obedience and confidence of the great patriarch, virtues that earned him sanctity and eternal salvation.

Vengeance has a lofty significance, and shines with splendour when it is practised for God, against the evil one

Mount Carmel (Israel)

Mary, like no other, merits the title of mother and sister of Jesus, for the sole desire of her Immaculate Heart is to do the will of God

The family of God

⁴⁸ But He said in reply to the one who told Him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Our Lord's answer surprises everyone. For Him the bonds of consanguinity represent nothing as compared with the supernatural relationship existing among those who do the will of the Father. These are the true children of God, for they live in grace and in obedience to the Faith. Consequently, the spiritual bond that unites the Trinity to Their children is much more consistent, perfect and real than the bonds arising from mere nature.

The explanation of the new divine family brings with it the need for a *metanoia*, a change of mentality. *Ubi maior, minor cessat* – where the superior is, the inferior ceases. In the face of the inestimable gift of being a child of God, human connections pale, like the light of a candle at sunrise. Jesus Himself states: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt 10:37).

The profound relationship between Our Lord and Mary Most Holy

How then should we understand the relationship between the Divine Redeemer and His Mother? Far from casting a shadow on the intimate and close bond between Jesus and Mary, this Gospel sheds light on the beauty and holiness of the union between them.

Our Lady was the most obedient creature of all time. To do the will of God was the sole desire of her Immaculate Heart, and She accomplished it with unswerving determination, adapting herself generously to the designs of the Most High, however incomprehensible and painful they might be. Docile to the message of the Archangel Gabriel, the Blessed Virgin opened the gates of justice so that the Word could descend to earth, and She was proclaimed blessed by her cousin Elizabeth for having believed what had been announced to Her. She showed herself ready to make any sacrifice, even to see her Son die on the gallows of the Cross, giving her "*fiat*" at each step.

Mary, like no other creature, merits the title of mother and sister of Jesus Christ in the spiritual sense that is attributed to Her in the above passage. And it is from this point of view that we must enthusiastically praise her Divine Motherhood, the indissoluble bond that unites Her to her beloved Son – a natural bond, no doubt, but one that would mean nothing if it were not assumed and perfected by a supernatural bond of incalculable splendour.

In this way, the Virgin-Mother is, in the highest sense of the term, the divine vengeance against Eve's fault and against the one who tempted her in the belief of obtaining a definitive triumph. The malice of this first virgin was far exceeded by the holiness and fidelity of Mary, thus giving God a most glorious victory in the order of Redemption, in the face of the relative failure caused by man's sin in the order of creation.

III – OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL TODAY

The memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel shines in the liturgical calendar with particular brilliance for its connection with the prophetic cohorts of Mount Carmel and the fiery spirituality of St. Elijah, as well as for the universal diffusion of the holy Marian scapular. Nevertheless, a halo of mystery surrounds this very special title.

The Blessed Virgin herself encouraged this devotion in her most celebrated apparitions. At Lourdes, the last manifestation of the Blessed Virgin took place on July 16, and at Fatima, Mary showed herself to the three little shepherds clothed in the habit of Carmel on October 13. Both occurrences unveil a magnificent horizon that arouses lively interest.

A light of hope amidst the general apostasy,

We are living in a time of prevarication that embraces all peoples, the most varied cultures and even religion itself; accordingly, it is imperative that the mission of Elijah be renewed with urgency and redoubled zeal. At the time of that providential man, all Israel was following false gods; today, however, an even worse situation is evident. Centuries after the Redemption wrought by Our Lord, the old Christian Civilization is being swept away by a torrent of apostasy that drags great multitudes with it. Moreover, the crisis that has taken hold in Catholic circles has reached

such proportions that – oh, sorrow! – we see “the abomination of desolation [...] standing in the holy place” (Mt 24:15).

Faced with this sombre prospect, there is only one way out: the Virgin of the Apocalypse, clothed in splendour, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars (cf. Rv 12:1). For our times, the Most High has entrusted the mission of Elijah to Her – a mission incalculably more heroic and grandiose than that of the fiery prophet.

The flowering Virgin of Mount Carmel, who in the fullness of time was God’s reprisal for Eve’s disobedience, will in these latter times be His most sublime vengeance against the sin of those who trample the most precious Blood of Christ underfoot. Through her faithful children, She will overthrow the idols of today and free the Church from the dark and festering prison in which her enemies intend to keep her as if immured alive, since they cannot destroy her by virtue of the promise of immortality that sustains her (cf. Mt 16:18).

During the holy battle of the Faith, exhortations to courage will be heard from Mary’s most pure lips, similar to those found in the Book of Revelation of St. John, predilect son of the best of mothers:

“After this I saw another Angel coming down from Heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendour. And he called out with a mighty voice, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul and hateful bird; for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness.’ Then I heard another voice from Heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as Heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed. [...] Since in her heart she says, “A queen I sit, I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,” so shall her plagues come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”’ (18:1-8).



Our Lady of Fatima
clothed in the mantle of Carmel

Symbolized by the little cloud that announced to Elijah the approach of the rain, Mary Most Holy will shine on the summit of Mount Carmel, encouraging the hosts of the good and scattering God’s enemies, so as to establish the Reign of Christ on earth, as She announced in Fatima: “In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.” With our eyes fixed on Our Lady of Mount Carmel, let us strive with fidelity and zeal to fight for God’s cause, certain of victory. The day of holy vengeance will not delay; let us rejoice and be glad, for our deliverance is near! ✧

*She who was
God’s reprisal
for Eve’s
disobedience
will, in
these latter
times, be
His sublime
vengeance
against the
sin of those
who trample
the Blood of
her Divine
Son underfoot*

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.108, a.1.

² Idem, *ibidem*.

³ Idem, a.3.

⁴ Idem, a.1, ad 2.

⁵ Cf. Idem, a.2, ad 2.

⁶ Cf. Idem, ad 3.

⁷ ST. PIUS V. *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices*, n.1.

Royalty and Misfortune Embrace

The twelfth century saw, united in one chosen man, the most exalted and the most abject state possible at that time. However, his figure has been immortalized in history as a symbol of heroic courage in the face of suffering.



Sr. Patricia Victoria Villegas, EP

After the First Crusade, proclaimed by Pope Urban II, the Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord Jesus Christ was recaptured from the hands of the Mohammedans, and the Christians founded a kingdom in Jerusalem. By its august link with the Saviour, it thus became the centre of attention of all Christendom.

What glory for the Holy City, but what paradoxical glory! It was not

the gold and silver, nor the victories and the success that made it great before the nations, but the suffering, the struggle and the cross.

Sadly, this holy kingdom was poisoned by ambition and, in the 12th century, its former splendour was on the wane. In the beginning, the Court of Jerusalem had been such a bulwark of unpretentiousness that its first monarch, Godfrey of Bouillon, had refused to wear a gold

crown because he did not feel worthy to wear it where Christ was pleased to be crowned with thorns. But now it was corrupted by vanity. The ideal of the Crusades had been extinguished.

Nevertheless, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, would, like the sun, manifest its most beautiful splendours at its twilight.

A boy marked by suffering

King Amalric I, a descendant of the nobility of Anjou in

France, bestowed upon the holy city a virtuous heir to the throne. His dedication to his studies, his vivacity during recreation, his agility in horsemanship, superior to that of his predecessors, would have given the whole kingdom reason to place the greatest hopes in him, if the boy had not already been, at such a tender age, marked with the sign of the predestined: suffering.

At the age of nine, Baldwin was visited by tragedy. William of Tyre, his tutor, recounts that one day, while the child was playing with other boys of his age, he noticed that no blows caused him pain, but that they were taken with indifference: "I thought at first that in him there was a merit of patience and not a lack of sensitivity; I called him over and began to examine the cause of this manner of acting and I finally discovered that his right arm and hand were somewhat insensitive."

This situation worried William and, above all, the boy's father. After consulting the doctors, their worst suspicions were confirmed: he had contracted leprosy, an incurable disease in those days.

When he reached puberty, Baldwin was informed of his illness. However, the news in no way shook the virile strength of his soul: al-



While yet a child, the one called to be king was struck with the dreaded disease of leprosy

William of Tyre discovers the signs of leprosy in the young Baldwin, illumination from the work "Estoire d'Eracles" - British Library, London

though yet so young, seeing himself invited by the Divine Redeemer to climb Calvary, he behaved as a hero and never flinched in the face of pain.

A soul of invincible strength

On the death of Amalric I, the prince was crowned and consecrated king in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on July 15, 1174, at the age of thirteen. From then on, he was called Baldwin IV.

We can well imagine the drama of this young man. In the Holy Land, Our Lord Jesus Christ had worked wondrous miracles: the deaf could hear, the blind could see, the paralyzed could walk; His mere shadow drove away sickness. There, above all, the Redeemer had healed lepers! Had the age of miracles ended? Could He not restore the young king to health? Certainly, thoughts like these invaded Baldwin's soul as he strolled through the streets of Jerusalem... And the hope of a miracle gave him courage to continue his government. But he was ready, if healing did not come, to remain firm in his duty, because the Divine Lamb, wounded and disfigured like a leper, had also chosen the Cross for His throne.

Now, the suffering of the prince was not restricted to his illness. Ambition and self-interest were rife at the court of Jerusalem. Since he could not have descendants, everyone coveted the throne, and far from wishing him well, they longed for his death. Knowing the state of the nobility, Baldwin foresaw the ruin of his kingdom; there was no one around him worthy to succeed him.

As if that were not enough, Saladin, leader of the centuries-old enemies of Christ, the Mohammedans, taking advantage of a series of circumstances, among them the fact that a leper "child" reigned in Jerusalem, decid-

ed to launch a series of attacks to take possession of Damascus, a key city for the conquest of the whole territory.

It was in this context that Baldwin's first battle took place. At the age of fourteen he commanded the Catholic army, joining the troops of his cousin Raymond of Tripoli. On August 1, 1176, on the plain of Beqaa, the leprous king won a resounding victory after a hard fight. Despite his malady, he rode like a true warrior and wielded his spear with great



A terrible external enemy, a decadent court, inexorably declining health: such was the inheritance of the new king

Coronation of Baldwin IV, by Simon Marmion - Geneva Library (Switzerland)

strength. The Christian knights had proof of the military genius of their ruler and the bravery of his temperament; back in Jerusalem, he was acclaimed by all the people.

He moved Heaven...

This invincible soul, seeing so many tragedies come crashing down upon his head while his leprosy manifested itself each day with more grievous symptoms, would have had every excuse to dispense him-

self from his arduous duties as a warrior. Nevertheless, he waged the most glorious and illustrious battles, one of which, especially memorable, took place at Montgisard.

Seizing on the absence of Baldwin and the Christian troops, who were fighting at Ascalon, Saladin presumptuously set out against the Holy City. The young king, aged sixteen, suffering the pains of the open lesions that pressed against his armour, left Ascalon, where he had won another victory, and went out in pursuit of the sultan with only three hundred and seventy horsemen, most of them rear-guard fighters. He surprised Saladin halfway to Jerusalem, but the unexpectedness of the encounter did not make up for the numerical disproportion between the two armies: the Christians numbered but a few hundred against tens of thousands of enemy troops. Baldwin sensed the hesitation of his men...

He then descended from his mount and prostrated himself with his face to the ground before a fragment of the true Cross, carried by Bishop Albert of Bethlehem. Filled with faith, he implored Our Lord Jesus Christ to give them the victory. Then an unquestionably moving scene unfolded: as tears streamed down the wounded face of Baldwin, newly risen from the sandy ground, his soldiers, enraptured before such sublimity, vowed to win or die! In their hearts holy wrath joined forces with faith, and the ideal of the first Crusades shone once more.² They were all "filled with heavenly grace, which made them stronger than usual."³

The battle began and the far more numerous Muslim army was unable to withstand the impetus of the cavalry charges from the Franks. As evening fell, the latter were in hot pursuit of the fleeing enemy. Saladin managed to escape, but when he reached



**Despite his malady, Baldwin always advanced with irresistible impetus!
This chosen man moved Heaven and imposed respect on hell, for he knew how to be another Christ on earth**

“Battle of Ascalon”, by Charles-Philippe Larivière - Palace of Versailles (France)

Cairo, the centre of the Mohammedan empire, he found that his soldiers had been reduced to a few hundred. The Christian victory at Montgisard had been complete!

This magnificent feat, obtained with the help of Heaven and considered by William of Tyre as the most memorable, occurred in the third year of the reign of Baldwin IV, who was gloriously received in Jerusalem to the singing of the *Te Deum*.

...and imposed respect on the infernal regions!

Many may think that if Baldwin had not been a leper, history would have been very different. Although there may be some truth in this statement, we cannot fail to consider that, without this paradoxical misfortune, the Kingdom of Jerusalem would never have had the glory of being governed by a monarch so similar to the Divine Redeemer. And this is an incomparable gift!

Indeed, Baldwin became so intimately united with the Crucified King that he was able to put the enemy to flight by his mere presence, just as the Saviour did in the Garden

of Olives when He caused those who came to arrest Him to fall prostrate (cf. Jn 18:4-6). This event, perhaps as beautiful as the victory at Montgisard, took place in Beirut.

The arrogant disobedience of Raynald of Châtillon, a vassal of the Christian king, incited Saladin to attack that city by land and sea. Baldwin was then almost in his death agony due to the advance of the leprosy: “The unfortunate prince had lost his sight and the extremities of his body were in a state of putrefaction; he no longer had the use of his feet or his hands.”²⁴ Unable to ride, he nevertheless wanted, out of fidelity to his duty as monarch, to go to the defence of his rebellious subject, but not without first severely reprimanding him for his conduct.

He advanced, carried on a litter, accompanied by seven hundred men, against twenty thousand Muslims. His impetus was irresistible! Attacking the enemy by surprise, he burned their fleets; the “bold” Saladin, merely upon learning of the presence of the young hero at the head of the Catholic soldiers, fled in terror.

“In the first victory [at Montgisard], he moved Heaven by bowing

down in the desert; in the second, he commanded the respect of hell by making Saladin withdraw.”²⁵ Such was the glory of a man who knew how to be, respecting the due proportions, another Christ on earth!

God glorifies him in eternity

On March 16, 1185, at the age of twenty-four, King Baldwin gave his soul to God. Victorious against all misfortunes by his iron will, his patience in suffering and his courage in the face of the worst circumstances, he shone in the firmament of history.

Though leprosy had devoured his body, in his soul it had left the luminous mark of heroism. With what admiration we will behold the wounds of this warrior, king and “martyr” of suffering, made resplendent on the day of the Resurrection, when the glory of his soul will be manifested in his body!

Baldwin IV has not yet been raised to the honour of the altars, but, without doubt, for him who suffered so steadfastly on this earth and before whom the worst enemies of the Holy Church trembled, Our Lord Jesus Christ reserved a throne of glory in eternity! ✧

Souls that Mark the Course of History

When God decides to carry out His great interventions in history, the most outstanding and significant graces are not like the ordinary favours that He grants daily to each individual, but the Creator chooses certain people who are sometimes even naturally formed for the task for which He destines them.

Owing to the love that God nurtures for these people – even before creating them, because they represent, in His wisdom, a special role in the divine plans – whether by virtue of their own actions, or the correspondence or lack of correspondence of those called to pray and sacrifice for them, these people may be endowed with a force of impact on history that carries it forward.

To use a military image, like a war tank that advances towards a wall and knocks it down, and goes on to cross straight through a whole block, these people are the tanks of history. [...]

There are two ways in which someone can demonstrate that he has a plan. One is to follow the straight course right to the end. The other is, while crossing the worst and most varied obstacles, to continue invariably in the same direction. This is one type of strength in a plan. God combines the two methods, at times allotting a royal share of obstacles to

some, and then making them shine more splendidly, almost as if they were the authors of the plan they have accomplished.

Nevertheless, God's masterplan is to cull from the course of things – to put it in human terms – a certain quota of glory. It being well understood that, since the Almighty created a countless number of intelligent and free beings, many of these creatures would do the opposite of His will. [...]

The elect, in the sense in which the Chosen People were and the Catholic Church is such, occupy a very important place in God's plans, but the offences committed by them play a very great part in divine justice.

The Creator is merciful towards them, but their sins especially offend Him and weigh heavily enough for Him to modify His plans.

Thus, all history revolves around the gratitude and ingratitude shown by the elect. Many of the tortuous and frightful signs in history, including the decline or apparent collapse of institutions, are related to sins committed in the institutions themselves, which, according to their correspondence or non-correspondence to grace, are left with a certain freedom, granted by God, to trace out the plans of history, with extraordinary glory or blame hovering over them for the direction taken by humanity.



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Dr. Plinio during a conference
in the 1990s

Occasionally, Providence raises up an avenger for the divine plans that have been squandered, who is not necessarily the one who punishes, but the one who destroys the confusion. He then re-establishes the clarity of the course and souls advance.

Thus there is a whole interplay of faithful and unfaithful souls, including expiatory victims, who preserve or corrupt institutions, and an ensemble of mercy and justice of which only God is aware. Then He goes about creating other souls, raising up vocations, giving graces to carry out a plan, because in His infinite goodness He has granted to some souls the honour of marking the course of history together with Him. ✧

Taken, with minor adaptations, from:

CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio.

A História gira em torno dos eleitos [History Revolves around the Elect].

In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XXIII N.267 (June, 2020); p.21-23

¹ BORDONOVE, Georges. *Les Croisades et le Royaume de Jérusalem*. Paris: Pygmalion, 2002, p.259-260.

² Cf. Idem, p.281.

³ MICHAUD, Joseph-François. *História das Cruzadas*. São Paulo: Editora das Américas, 1956, v.II, p.378.

⁴ Idem, p.386.

⁵ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Balduino IV, o protótipo do católico [Bald-

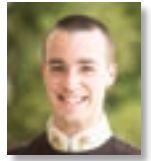
win IV: the Catholic prototype] – II. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XXI. N.246 (Sept., 2018); p.24.

FERDINAND ÁLVAREZ DE TOLEDO Y PIMENTEL

A Grandee of Spain

The austere figure of the Duke of Alba is often presented as a bloodthirsty man. However, a close examination of the facts reveals the bias underlying this judgement.

José Manuel Gómez



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The 16th century undoubtedly ranks among the most momentous in universal history. Over its course we find the emergence of a great number of Saints who marked their epoch, the dawn of unprecedented maritime prodigies – such as the circumnavigation of the globe, or the conquest of America – and an endless series of doctrinal controversies which, if not resolved with the subtlety of the pen... often ended up being settled at the point of the sword.

It was in this context that, on October 29, 1507, a child was born in the Castilian lands of Piedrahíta, destined to play an important role in the future of European and world events. His name was Ferdinand Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentel, third Duke of Alba, heir to one of the noblest Spanish lineages. His house belonged among the twenty-five families whose members bore the title of *Grandees of Spain*, and were therefore considered the king's "cousins".

On the battlefield

From his youth, Ferdinand received a privileged education: he was trained in the subtleties of diplomacy and cul-

ture, as befitted someone of such noble birth, without neglecting the equally important art of war. This he learned from books – such as Vegetius' *De re militari*, which he knew by heart – but, above all, on the battlefield itself.

Intense and admirable was his career in this field. At a mere seventeen years of age, he distinguished himself as a young captain in a conflict with the French over the village of Fuenterrabía. Once the Spanish had conquered the fortress, Charles V entrusted its government to the brave officer – still a boy in years but already a hero at heart – who had distinguished himself in the enterprise.

He further developed his martial experience in 1535, during the campaign of Tunis, in which Charles V's army defeated the pirate Barbarossa and regained dominion of the Mediterranean Sea.

In 1547, he was appointed captain-general of the imperial army for the Battle of Mühlberg against the German Protestant princes. Not shying away from the rule of the best commanders in history, the Duke of Alba positioned himself in the vanguard and, furiously fight-

ing the enemy, brought victory to his lord's side.

After this resounding triumph over the heretics, he was flatteringly asked whether it was true that, on the day of the battle, the sun had stood still in the sky as had happened to Joshua. He only replied that he had so much to do on earth that he had had no time to look at the sun.

Tenacity and determination

He performed countless other decisive interventions in the enterprises entrusted to him by the Emperor; a summary description of them would exceed the space allotted for this article. Truly, Charles V did not err when, in a letter to his son Philip II, he wrote: "The Duke of Alba is the most skilful statesman and the best soldier I have in my kingdoms."¹

After the emperor's abdication from the throne in 1556, Don Ferdinand retained a very important role at the Spanish court, as it was to his advice that Philip II most often turned. With his characteristic wit and ingenuity, he stood by the new monarch in the most diverse difficulties, offering him solutions of undeniable wisdom, both in war and diplo-

macy, although the two men sometimes clashed because of the general's truculence.

Revolt in Flanders

In 1566, the Duke of Alba embarked on what was to be the greatest epic of his life. Following a frustrated attempt by the king to apply the decrees of the Council of Trent in the Netherlands, a revolt instigated by small groups of Protestants threatened royal sovereignty. For Philip II, this uprising was the last straw. He had said to Pope St. Pius V:

"Before I suffer the least thing to the detriment of religion or the service of God, I would lose all my states and die a hundred deaths, for I neither think nor wish to be lord of heretics."²

The monarch then gathered his advisors and explained the problem to them. In a short time the plan was outlined. Someone other than himself was to appear there, in order to teach the rebels a good lesson – a harsh mission for which only one name seemed to meet the necessary requirements: *Don Ferdinand*. After the Duke had duly punished the guilty, the King himself was to arrive to grant pardon

to the repentant and to alleviate the situation.

It was a wise project, which surely would have yielded good results if Philip II had done his part.

The "Spanish Road" and military discipline

The Duke of Alba, of course, accepted the mission. However, it was not easy from the start. First of all, he had to move an entire army to a region with which they had no frontier. He decided to do part of the journey by land, since reaching the Low

Countries by sea meant facing the infamous English ships. The land route, however, required great preparation and logistical efficiency that must not fail, on pain of decimating the regiments before they could even engage the enemy.

On the other hand, it was necessary to instil utmost discipline in the entire army because, having to cross neutral – and often not so friendly – territories, the expedition would fail if any outburst provoked the neighbouring kingdoms to take the opposite side.

But order was nothing new for those marching under Ferdinand Álvarez de Toledo. In the words of the renowned historian William Thomas Walsh, "this was one of the memorable marches in history. Memorable not only for its speed, but for the iron discipline of the duke. Looting and pillaging were forbidden. If a soldier insulted a woman as he passed, in a few moments he was hanging from the nearest tree."³

It was in this way that the *Tercios* – the fearsome infantry that immortalized the Spanish army of the Golden Age – reached Flanders, after cross-

Ferdinand Álvarez de Toledo was the ideal person for the mission of re-establishing order and above all the practice of the Catholic Faith in the realms of Philip II



"The Spanish Road", by Augusto Ferrer-Dalmau; previous page, Ferdinand Álvarez de Toledo, by Anthonis Mor - Museum of the Spanish Society of America, New York

Reproduction

ing the Savoy Alps, Switzerland and part of France. This route would become known as the *Spanish Road*, due to the volume of soldiers and supplies that crossed it during this incursion and over the following decades.

The Iron Duke

Once in the Netherlands, the Duke of Alba immediately set to work. His intentions, should he succeed, had never been in doubt: “to cut off the heads of the leaders – he had done so repeatedly – and bring the others under obedience. A mentality like his, accustomed to seeing things in terms of white or black, was not disposed to make subtle distinctions. He had orders and was determined to carry them out.”⁴

With great shrewdness, he surprised and apprehended the Counts of Egmont and Horn – key men in the revolt – and, after a nine-month trial, convicted them of the crime of high treason. Over the course of his mission in Flanders, about a thousand seditionists suffered the same fate.⁵

Although the severe tactic produced good effects in the short term, it was already foreseeable that after a few years the situation would become untenable. Thus, on December

18, 1573, the Duke of Alba had to secretly leave the Netherlands and was replaced by *Don Luís de Requesens y Zúñiga*.

His next campaign took place in Portugal when, following the death of Cardinal Henrique – an elderly, sickly man who had inherited the Lusitanian throne on the death of *Dom Sebastian* – Philip II became first in line for the right of succession. The Duke of Alba, then seventy-three years old, was put at the head of an army of twenty thousand soldiers to secure his lord’s interests. It goes without saying that his methods obtained the desired result.

It was during this mission that, on December 15, 1582, that iron man

surrendered his soul to God, struck down by an illness that had lasted a month. He had asked Philip II for permission to return to his land in Alba de Tormes, eager to spend his last days there. However, the permission never came.

Talis vita finis ita, says the well-known adage: as one lives, so is one’s end; and it was only natural that *Don Ferdinand*, having spent his whole life fighting bravely on the battlefield, should also die on campaign.

The black legend

With the passage of time, the energetic, austere and inflexible figure of the Duke of Alba was converted into a kind of bloodthirsty monster, mainly due to his actions in the Netherlands. There were even those who tried to save his reputation by comparing him to a madman like Robespierre.⁶ However, a close examination of the facts reveals the bias of these judgements.

In the first place, the crimes committed by Protestants during the period of upheaval were countless. By way of example, we may cite the case of two Anabaptists. These confessed that, when tired of one of their wives – each of them had four – the minis-

Commanding the fearsome infantry of the “Tercios”, the Duke of Alba accomplished his mission in Flanders with excellence



Spanish “Tercios”, detail of “Rocroi, the last Tercio,” by Augusto Ferrer-Dalmau

(CC by-sa 3.0)

ter would take her to the woods and silently kill her. One of these “holy men” admitted having murdered six or seven women. They also taught that it was licit to kill and rob Catholics.

The depredations of churches by Calvinists and Anabaptists were frequent. In less than a week, four hundred Catholic churches had been destroyed, with the customary desecrations of the Blessed Sacrament, statues and even consecrated nuns and ministers of God, who were beaten or expelled from their convents.

Some might claim that the heretics were seeking a minimum of tolerance in the face of royal tyranny. However, Margaret of Parma – regent of the Low Countries and sister of Philip II – complained in a letter to the latter that she had proposed total freedom of worship to the insurgent leaders along with other concessions, and had received a refusal in reply.

After all, she said, it was not freedom of religion that the rebels wanted, “but the freedom of all religions except the Catholic.”⁷

Criterion and judgement

On the other hand, it is completely invalid to judge the attitudes of a personage of the past according to the standards of our century. When comparing the attitudes of the Duke of Alba with those of some of his contemporaries, certain authors even consider him humane and in-

dulgent, in terms of the methods employed or even the number of those condemned.

We need to think no further than of the English courts which, during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, sentenced countless completely innocent Catholics to much more violent deaths. And the same can be said of the Tudor proceedings in Ireland or of the Habsburgs in Transylvania.⁸

If the laws applied by the Duke of Alba were so unjust and cruel, why did they form the basis of Dutch criminal law and procedure for the next two and a half centuries? Perhaps because, as Roca Barea quipped, “the law of Alba was harsh, but it was law, and not the arbitrary application of punishment.”⁹

Whatever the case, it seems certain that he acted in good faith throughout his mandate. On his deathbed he said that he had not shed one drop of

*His profile must
be analysed,
not according to
today's paradigms,
but from the
standpoint of his
mission in God's eyes*



Ferdinand Álvarez de Toledo,
by Francisco Jover y Casanova -
Prado Museum, Madrid

Reproduction

blood against his conscience during his life, and that the executions he had ordered to be carried out in Flanders were fore heresy and insurrection.

We conclude, then, with a sentence written by himself. It shows that his spirit was too great to harbour that petty concern for the opinion of others which leads men to place their own reputation above their sense of duty:

“The evil nature of some wicked people leads them to give the worst possible interpretation to everything; but the truth about all this will only be decided by time and God.”¹⁰ ♦

¹ WEISS, Juan Bautista. *Historia Universal*. Barcelona: La Educación, 1929, v.IX, p.285.

² FERNÁNDEZ ÁLVAREZ, Manuel. *El Duque de Hierro. Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, III Duque de Alba*. Pozuelo de Alarcón: Espasa-Calpe, 2007, p.315.

³ WALSH, William Thomas. *Felipe II*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1943, p.461.

⁴ Idem, p.463.

⁵ There is a glaring contradiction when it comes to the number of those executed during the campaign in the Netherlands. According to Roca Barea, “the propaganda converted the Duke of Alba into a monster and raised the death toll from 1,073 executions to 200,000” (ROCA BAREA, María Elvira. *Imperiofobia y leyenda negra. Roma, Rusia, Estados Unidos*

y el Imperio Español. 28.ed. Madrid: Siruela, 2020, p.253). Walsh provides less divergent figures: “The number of persons executed by this tribunal during the few years of its jurisdiction has been variously estimated to range from 1,700, which Cabrera cites, to the 8,000 which the Protestants, exaggerating greatly, allege” (WALSH, op. cit., p.464).

⁶ Cf. PIRENNE, Henri. *Historia de Bélgica*, apud FERNÁNDEZ ÁLVAREZ, op. cit., p.359.

⁷ WALSH, op. cit., p.450.

⁸ Cf. Idem, p.464; ROCA BAREA, op. cit., p.254.

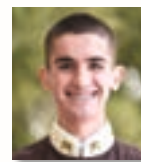
⁹ ROCA BAREA, op. cit., p.254.

¹⁰ WALSH, op. cit., p.522.



When Heroism Vanquished Frivolity

Faced with the maelstrom of blood that inundated France, Marie Antoinette, once vain as a princess and frivolous as a queen, underwent a surprising transformation. From the queen emerged a martyr, and from the doll, a heroine.



Fábio Ricardo Soares

Born into one of Europe's most illustrious families, the little Archduchess Marie Antoinette of Habsburg harmonized a majesty and a sweetness that were truly touching to those around her. Her mother, Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, did her utmost to educate her daughter for her future. A splendid future seemed to smile upon her from the cradle; but alas, it would have been difficult to find anyone more superficial in that second half of the 18th century.

Yes, the girl with graceful and well-defined features, whose crystal-clear blue eyes enchanted everyone, used her charm to impose her own will on others, finding in this an effective means to evade the obligations that etiquette imposed on her. Consequently, as the famous Austrian writer Stefan Zweig recounts, "when she was but thirteen, there had become obvious the dangers implicit in her character – that of one who had abundant capacity and very little will."¹

If she had grown up under the auspices of her strict mother, perhaps she would have been set right. However,

her destiny changed rapidly as preparations began for the marriage of the Archduchess of Austria to the Crown Prince and future King of France, Louis, who would be the sixteenth of that name.

The wedding of Marie Antoinette

In 1769, Louis XV officially asked the Empress for the hand of the fourteen-year-old Marie Antoinette in order to unite her with his grandson. Thus, the two most eminent houses of Europe, the Habsburgs and the Bourbons, would come together in an alliance from which a new, even more glorious strain could be born...

Once on French territory, Maria Theresa's daughter met the man who was to marry her. The contrast was striking. She was agile, gentle, affectionate and beautiful; he was stout, cold and profoundly shy. The young Bourbon did not seem very committed to the new relationship. In fact, as a rule, only two things really interested him: hunting and good food...

After the not-so-romantic marriage ceremony, Marie Antoinette was ushered into the court at Versailles.

The conquest of Paris

What would Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Attila the Hun or Genghis Khan think, seeing that young girl conquer, with her smile, the power-holders of a kingdom with much more aplomb than they would have done with iron, fire, blood, sweat and tears?

Despite her own inexperience and the subtleties of court life, the princess managed to triumph with finesse in that first battle. However, the taking of France was not yet complete; the capital still had to be marched upon. After an inexplicable three-year delay, on June 18, 1773, she finally obtained authorization from Louis XV to visit Paris.

The carriages glittering in the daylight, the silk dresses and the tricorne hats on the powdered hair of the nobles announced the pompous arrival of the court in the City of Light. Unceasing exclamations arose from the dazzled people.

Having arrived at the Tuileries Palace, Marie Antoinette went to the window and was startled to see such a huge crowd. Seeing the princess' as-

tonishment, Marshal de Brissac declared with typically French courtliness: “Madame, I hope His Highness the Dauphin will not take it amiss, but you have before you two hundred thousand Parisians who have all fallen in love with you.”²²

However, it was not only Marie Antoinette who conquered Paris. The capital had also captivated her, perhaps too much...

The throne without the queen

The bells tolled, announcing the death of the king and the consequent accession of Louis XVI to the throne. It can readily be imagined how, for Marie Antoinette, the thousand obligations of court, now even more demanding because of her state as queen, taken together with her husband’s indifference towards her, all amounted to an unbearable burden.

This situation explains – though certainly does not justify – the path taken by this soul, so little accustomed to self-discipline from childhood. Night escapes from Versailles to the Parisian balls – masked, so as not to be recognized; long getaways at the Trianon, a rich palace adorned with parks, vegetable gardens and country houses, in which she spent her days at expensive parties; and so many other shallow amusements. Such excesses were exploited by the press, unscrupulously filling the accounts with details as obscene as they were fictitious.

The days went by, and with them the years, the extravagances and the lies. However, the queen’s behaviour did not improve until one event changed her life: the birth of her children.

The couple had four descendants, two of whom died prematurely before the Revolution. This profound metamorphosis – brought on by her maternity – led Marie Antoinette to abandon her careless games in order to devote herself to the precautions of pregnancy and, later, to her duties towards her offspring.

Was it the first step towards a more orderly and sedate life? It seems plausible; fate, however, did not grant her the chance, for “at the very time when Marie Antoinette’s internal unrest was waning, a period of unrest was beginning for the world.”²³

The queen without a throne

Little by little, the Queen’s popularity declined, not only owing to her bad habits, which unfortunately were once again becoming widely publicized, but also because her subjects wanted to hold her responsible for the financial crisis that was shaking France.

Then, another drop was added to the caldron already on the verge of boiling over: the so-called “diamond necklace affair”, a huge misjudgement enveloped in a thousand treacheries and lies, which led Marie Antoinette to ask Louis XVI to have Cardinal de Rohan arrested and publicly tried.

It is difficult for us in the twenty-first century to imagine the scandal involved at that time in a monarch demanding the imprisonment and prosecution of a prince of the Catholic Church. And to make matters worse, the accused was declared innocent, at least of that fault...

However, as we have said, this was a mere drop of water. In the eyes of public opinion, the prestige of the monarchy was dead. All that was needed was a puff of wind to turn the corpse into dust.

The royal family leaves Versailles

On July 14, 1789, the fall of the Bastille marked the beginning of a string of violent social upheavals – admittedly, very well coordinated – to which history gave the name of French Revolution.

A few months later, on October 5, a horde of women, together with some men in disguise to guarantee the success of the aggressive operation, left the capital for Versailles, in order to bring the royal family back to Paris. From then on, they would have to reside in the old Tuileries Palace, under a thinly disguised regime of house arrest.

What a difference between this situation and life in the past! From the parties at the Trianon and the bustle of the balls, to seclusion, silence, sobri-



Motherhood caused the young queen to abandon for a time her extravagances and frivolous diversions, to devote herself to her duties towards her children

Marie Antoinette with her children, by Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun; previous page, in 1769, shortly before her marriage with the Dauphin, by Joseph Ducreux - Palace of Versailles (France)

ety. In that environment Marie Antoinette began to understand the silent language of suffering; she found the calm that purifies, recollects and brings order. There she came to know herself and took another step towards a so long-delayed maturity.

The queen devised plans for escape and alliances, but they all failed, either because of the king's indecision or a lack of allies. Only one thing consistently gave her happiness: the company of her children. For them she continued to fight.

With the help of Fersen, a faithful friend to the point of risking his life to save her, she planned and executed the famous flight to Varennes on June 20, 1791, which was frustrated at the last minute when, through a series of imprudent actions on the part of Louis XVI, the true identity of the fugitives was discovered.

From then on, the aggression and terror directed against the royal family only increased until culminating in the bloody abolition of the monarchy.

The Temple

On August 10, 1792, instigated primarily by Danton, a mob invaded the Tuileries and massacred the guard, with excesses of savagery that decency prevents us from narrating.⁴ In letters of blood, these atrocities

immortalize on the pages of history the day when Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette ceased to be the monarchs of France.

From there, the family was moved to the Temple, the former palace of the Knights Templar – the reason for its name – well known to the Queen who, in her youth, had visited the King's brother who lived there. But now there would no longer be the joy of the feasts and the echoes of dancing, but the heavy thud of soldiers' footsteps and ditties against the monarchy.

The monotony of that captivity was interrupted by other noises, such as that of the mob carrying a new trophy, the bloodied head of the Princess of Lamballe, to show to the queen. The king was advised not to let his wife to approach the window, but that was not necessary: Marie Antoinette fainted on hearing of her friend's beheading.

A few months later, on January 21, 1793, another head rolled, and with it a crown. Louis XVI was dead. On that day, "the guillotine had given Marie Antoinette, sometime Archduchess of Austria, then Dauphiness, and at length Queen of France, a new name – 'Widow Capet'."⁵

But much more was to come. The Revolution wanted to deal her another blow: to separate her from her beloved son, the dauphin of France.

And for the boy's guardian they chose a shoemaker named Simon, who had shown himself a zealot for the cause of the rebels. So, after having stripped Marie Antoinette of her crown, her friends and husband, they also robbed her of her son. What more could they do?

Finally, there was a knock on her cell door at two o'clock in the morning, informing her that she was to be tried by the Revolution and that she must move to another prison, the Conciergerie, also known as the "antechamber of death". While the Queen dwelt in that terrible place, the interrogations began.

To die is a victory

On October 14, 1793, the Widow Capet appeared before the tribunal. Standing before her accusers, she showed not the least sign of nervousness. At most, she occasionally ran her fingers over her chair as if playing a harpsichord.

The jury spouted accusations devoid of proof or logical order. They achieved nothing apart from showing the trial to be moved more by blind hatred than by the oft-touted values of the Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity.

Hébert, the canniest in that band of puppets, then decided to play his last card, which would subject Marie

A mob invades the Tuileries and records in the pages of history, with letters of blood, the day on which Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette ceased to be the monarchs of France

"The Taking of the Tuileries Palace", by Jean Duplessi-Bertaux - Palace of Versailles (France)





The joyous Queen of France, whose laughter had the charms of an unclouded happiness, drank the cup of gall destined for her by Divine Providence with dignity, determination, and Christian resignation

Marie Antoinette with her children, during the attack on the Tuileries Palace - Museum of the French Revolution, Vizille (France)

Antoinette to a torture perhaps worse than death: he accused her of committing scandalous sins with her own son. However, the falsehood of those attacks was so blatant that they fell flat. There was silence. The Queen did not say a word.

Finally, with her head held high and strong emotion, she said in a tone proper to great souls: "If I have made no reply, it is because nature refuses to answer such a charge brought against a mother! I appeal in this matter to all the mothers present in court."⁶ Could a mother commit such an abuse? Her words exploded like a bomb in Hébert's hands. In that hour, the majesty of Marie Antoinette, annihilated by hours of interrogation, sent a current of commotion through the room and left the prosecutors fearful of losing control.

Meanwhile, the accusations continued. There was a lack of evidence, it is true, but what did it matter? The

inquiry would be the proof... Thus, the condemnation was voted without further delay. On October 16, 1793, the guillotine sent tumbling to the ground that head covered with once-golden curls, now ashen from so much suffering.

This last change, though only a detail, seems to sum up Marie Antoinette's life. Suffering had imparted to the lady who had had everything in life, the only quality she lacked: venerability.

A precious homage

At the close of this article, we would not dare to omit some words of Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, a man who admired Marie Antoinette with true transports of enthusiasm, through a prism so Catholic that he did not hesitate to choose her as the theme of the first speech in his life, delivered at a meeting of Marian congregants:

"Amidst the collapse of the political and social edifice of the Bourbon monarchy, when all the world felt the ground crumble under its feet, the joyous Archduchess of Austria, the winsome Queen of France – whose elegant poise was reminiscent of a Sèvres figurine, and whose laughter had the charms of an unclouded happiness – drank the bitter draughts of the immense cup of gall with which Divine Providence resolved to glorify her, with admirable dignity, determination, and Christian resignation.

"There are certain souls who are great only when the gusts of misfortune break over them. Marie Antoinette, who was vain as a princess and unforgivably frivolous in her life as a queen, when faced with the maelstrom of blood and misery that inundated France, underwent a surprising transformation; and the historian, filled with awe, sees from the queen arise a martyr, and from the doll a heroine."⁷ ♦

¹ ZWEIG, Stefan. *Marie Antoinette*. London: Cassell, 1960, p. 5.

² Idem, p.74.

³ Idem, p.179.

⁴ For a realistic, powerful and, in a certain sense, repugnant description of what happened on that day, see: ESCANDE, Renaud (Dir.). *Le livre noir de la Révolution Française*. Paris: Du Cerf, 2008, p.53-64.

⁵ ZWEIG, op. cit., p.484.

⁶ Idem, p.558.

⁷ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. Maria Antonieta, arquiduquesa d'Áustria, rainha de França e Viúva Capeto

[Marie Antoinette: Queen of France and the Widow Capet]. In: *Opera Omnia. Reedição de escritos, pronunciamentos e obras*. São Paulo: Retornarei, 2008, v.I, p.84.

The Historical Role of Providential Men

In every historical period, God entrusts certain men with special missions for the benefit of society, above all with a view to eternity.

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira



In a broad sense, all men are providential, because they serve the designs of God. However, there is a special sense: there are those whom the Creator does not ask to lead merely a common life and, therefore, to serve themselves, but marks them to

accomplish a mission for the benefit of society, whether temporal or spiritual.

Exclusive mission, with no proportion to human capacity

What characterizes a providential man? He must, in the first place, carry out a task far greater than himself. There is no providential man whose stature is equal to what he needs to accomplish, because what God requires of him is generally something so great that it does not fall within the limits of human capacity.

In the second place, providential action always has a supernatural aspect, which consists in the operation of grace over souls, of which man can be a channel, but not the author. And what grace does, no one can do,

so that this action is invariably much greater than man.

In this sense, there are great providential men whose eminent capacities God uses to accomplish tasks even beyond these capacities. However, he can also choose lesser souls from whom he draws providential fruit.

The school of spiritual childhood of St. Therese of the Child Jesus has elements along these lines. In the human realm she was not exactly a great person. But she was great in what was apparently little, and from this came the doctrine of the little way, which signified an immense achievement in Catholic spirituality and, therefore, in what is most central to the history of the world, which is the history of the Church.

There is yet another aspect to be stressed in the providential man: in general, he is only useful in that mission for which God created him. If he wants to do something different, in almost all cases it will come to nothing; he will become like salt that does not season, destined to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by passers-by (cf. Mt 5:13).

Understanding, appetency and sensibility for the mission

The providential man, for his part, has an understanding of his mission,



St. Therese of the Child Jesus
in July of 1896

The tasks carried out by providential men are usually far greater than what could be accomplished with their own natural capabilities

an appetency and a sensitivity towards it that others do not possess. He perceives its meaning and importance, he knows how it must be carried out, he knows the ends that must be reached, as well as the means to achieve them; he has the tactics, the manoeuvres and the knack for achieving them.

In the life of Charlemagne, for example, we see this in a splendid way. He was the mighty emperor and the magnificent patriarch who inspired enthusiasm; he was the warrior who struck fear into all the adversaries of the Church.

He intervened in the regional councils of Gaul to demand that matters proceed properly. He argued with the bishops – without being considered anticlerical – and often it was his opinion that prevailed, although he had never studied theology.

On the other hand, Charlemagne was a formidable warrior; not just a general, but the head of a family of souls in his army. He gathered around himself his famous peers, who were other copies of himself, and these peers in turn gathered around themselves other knights. His army was almost like a religious order, praying or singing as it advanced towards the enemy, with Charlemagne at the head, brandishing his sword and facing every risk, always for the Catholic Church and Christian Civilization.

An invariable aspect: contradictions

There is yet another characteristic of providential man, which differs greatly from the modern mentality. Many people think that he is a comic book hero: that he has a magic gaze and is similar to a dracula who, when cornered and placed in a difficult situation, climbs to the ceiling using one finger and solves the problem from on high. In the end, everything works out; he never experiences setbacks.



Sergio Hollmann

Bust of Charlemagne -
Aachen Cathedral (Germany)

*The man
of God is often
obliged by the
circumstances
to constantly
place his trust in
Providence alone*

However, the providential man is the opposite of this. He goes through horrendous crises, during which things truly run the risk of going wrong if he does not make an effort and, above all, if he does not pray a great deal, placing his confidence in Our Lady. And these difficulties, in which everything almost collapses, often make of him a humiliated, persecuted, and despised man, with every appearance of having been defeated. He is not always a victorious man, who has made the heads of others the ground on which he walks; rather, his head is often the ground for others to tread upon.

But he trusts in Providence, who comes to his aid, sustains him, lifts

him up, encourages him and ends up bringing his work to a successful conclusion. A requirement to which the providential man is absolutely subject is that the disproportion between himself and his task appears clearly to the eyes of others, often leaving him in situations that make it clear that if it were not for grace he would achieve nothing, and if it were not for his faithfulness he would be crushed.

The waysides of history are full of providential men who abandoned their mission

Someone will say: “Dr. Plinio, I am not sure if this is true, because I see that all the providential men in history always succeed.” This is because history only presents those who have succeeded. How many providential men have fallen by the waysides of history! Men who have faltered, sold themselves, became soft or deteriorated in some way and, for this reason, they capitulate.

The objector may add, “However, there are some who are so favoured by Providence that they could not go astray.” It is true! The Apostles, for example. But how rare that is! Once again, I repeat, how many providential men fill the waysides... Along one such road there is a fig tree, from which dangles a hanged man. And that hanged man was a providential man, whose name was Judas Iscariot...

To such an extent is this true that, although it is theologically certain that the Apostles were confirmed in grace after Pentecost, they fought and struggled as if they were not, because they were not aware of it.

A calling apparent to the eyes of all, sometimes from the cradle

One could also say that there is an imponderable characteristic in the providential man. In general, he has a certain aura, and the people who have contact with him from his earliest days perceive a kind of predestina-

tion, an uncommon factor that makes him stand out and differentiates him from others.

Using a comparison, this calling manifests itself in him as, for example, life can be seen on human skin. It is enough to look at the hand of a living person to realize that it does not belong to a corpse. Thus something imponderable appears in the providential man that makes his mission – sometimes even initiated by Providence from the cradle – apparent to the eyes of all.

However, one should beware of self-love, because every proud person thinks that he has been prepared for some mission from the cradle, and he has the tendency to take on the role of the providential man for himself and to fabricate the characteristics of his aura.

So, what differentiates the proud from the providential man? Few see it, but there is a clear element. The former is all made up of the desire to appear and, for him, the cause is a banner that he waves in front of others to make a good impression. The providential man, on the other hand, however weak or even miserable he may be, sees and understands that he has a divine mission, which he really loves, with an understanding and a vision that come from this love. This is the sign of the vocation that shines out in him, sometimes in

spite of gross deficiencies, and that indicates a permanent call of God to something superior.

Providentiality in our days

Finally, it is worth considering whether those who, in our days, have the very special vocation of fighting the Revolution and of being instruments for the establishment of the Reign of Mary should be considered providential men.

It can be said that they are such, within certain limits, because they participate in the providentiality of the movement which aims at these ends in this peak moment in history. It is an exceptional calling to a higher understanding, to a special love, to a more complete dedication. And for those chosen, their lives have no savour, meaning or attraction if it is not by virtue of this call.

Those who feel this vocation should make the following petition to Our Lady. In the Litany of All Saints there is an invocation that they should constantly repeat: “*Ut mentes nostras ad cœlestia desideria erigas, te rogamus audi nos* – That Thou wouldst lift up our minds to heavenly desires, we beseech Thee, hear us.” This desire is evidently that of going to Heaven. But however noble and holy it may be, it is not enough. On earth we must love those things that are figures of heavenly real-

ities. And this has as its necessary corollary that we detest all that is contrary to them implacably, militantly, continuously, meticulously and inflexibly.

This involves an elevation of the soul by an operation of the Holy Spirit, through which the ideal of the Reign of Mary is loved more and more, its implantation is desired, and the present revolutionary order of things is hated.

The Maccabees, who rose up against those who wanted to paganize Israel and waged a real war that prepared for the advent of Christ, had this motto: “It is better to die than to live without honour in a devastated land” (cf. 1 Mc 3:59).

It would also be better for us to die, if we could not live in the ranks of the Counter-Revolution, fighting for the overthrow of the Revolution. We must ask Our Lady to give us such an ardent form of love for Her, that we may be entirely imbued with this conviction.

This is the real symptom that our souls have been lifted up to desire heavenly things and that they are therefore journeying towards Heaven – that eternal, perfect and enduring Reign of Our Lady, which we have learned to love by desiring Mary’s Reign on earth. ✧

Taken, with minor adaptations for the written language, from: Conference. São Paulo, 30/12/1965



In our times, those who are called by God to witness the dawn of the Reign of Mary become, in some measure, providential men

Façade of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

Queen of History from All Eternity

There are some kings who are kings from childhood; others, yet in their mother's womb when their father dies, inherit their kingship even before they are born; but no one is king before being conceived. Our Lady, centuries before She was conceived, was already Queen. She was always in the plans of the Eternal Father, in the love of the Word, in the yearnings of her Divine Spouse, the Holy Spirit, and because of this, all of history coursed towards Mary Most Holy. This is being Queen!

Our Lady knows God's intentions for history – a plan conditioned by the prayers, the acts of virtue and the sins of man.

After the infinitely precious Redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, humanity belongs to His Mystical Body, forming with Him a supernatural unity within whose internal reality the most delicate part of this plot unfolds. Bearing this in mind, it is depending on the way we react to graces, saying yes or no, that God draws up a general balance in which He shows both His infinite goodness and His infinite justice.

Nevertheless, by a truly magnificent disposition of His wisdom, God established this situation: He chose a creature who is entirely human, but absolutely perfect, being, moreover, Daughter of the Eternal Father, Mother of the Only-begotten Son and Spouse of the Divine Holy Spirit. She is always in a position to rectify human actions, at least in part, and, so to speak, to correct, reform and revise, accord-

ing to the plans of God's mercy, that which His justice would do.

And at the entreaties of Our Lady, which have never failed to be heeded, God as it were erases the plan of history written in pencil and allows the Blessed Virgin to trace in gold the true plan, which corresponds to His deepest intentions.

God would not have created Her if it were not for this. But if He had not created Her, it would have been difficult or impossible (I hesitate to use this term) to make history as beautiful as it is. Our Lady adorns history. And for this reason alone, She is on the one hand the Queen of History, because She gives, by a profound divine consent, a direction to history that, without Her, God would not have given. Our Lady, therefore, steers the helm of history.

On the other hand, the Blessed Virgin also requests the punishment of some. This is natural. When the Antichrist appears, the moment will come when Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, with a breath from His mouth, will exterminate him. But will this moment not be hastened by Our Lady? She will say: "Behold, the last remaining good ones are crying out and asking Thee to come! Come, please, your Mother asks Thee." And with the breath from Our Lord's lips, history will come to a close.

We thus understand the "intercessory" direction of history. God directs everything, but Our



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Statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in the church dedicated to Her in Overveen (Netherlands)

Lady fulfils His will by modifying His plans. In this way She directs history. ✧

Taken, with adaptations, from:
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BLESSED EUGÉNIE JOUBERT

Friend of the Heart of Jesus

“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” said the Divine Master. And He seeks souls who will be His friends, as Eugénie was.



Isabel de Sousa



Gustavo Kralj

The Sacred Heart of Jesus -
Private collection

Eugénie was called to be one of those souls whose relationship with Our Lord reminds the world of the infinite tenderness of God

To manifest His love for us, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became incarnate, lavishing the infinite treasures of His Sacred Heart upon mankind. And, not stopping at this, He has raised up chosen souls over the course of history, of whom He makes the living receptacles of this merciful love in order to remind humanity of the infinite tenderness of a God who is always ready to forgive and restore.

Such souls, true friends of the Heart of Jesus, are drawn into a heightened supernatural relationship with the Saviour. What is required of them, however, is a maximum degree of suffering and abandonment to the divine will. Simply put, they must fulfil the aphorism that the Divine Master Himself taught: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13).

In this article, let us meet one of these beloved souls.

Dawn of a vocation

It was late on that February 11, 1876, the feast of the first apparition

of Our Lady of Lourdes. At the home of the Joubert family, located on the arid plateau of Haute-Loire, relatives and friends were gathered to celebrate a birth. In the midst of the celebration, the mysterious and joyful ringing of bells was heard, continuing for several minutes. Not knowing the origin of the sound, everyone wondered what relation it might have to the birth of the child. The future would tell...

From an early age, the girl manifested a cheerful, serene temperament. At the age of five, she left her parents' care to be educated at the boarding school of the Ursulines of Monistrol, assuming its rigid discipline and austere abstinences with zeal. Together with the others, she always sought the last place and often received more reproaches than praise. In another school where she studied, one of the teachers, in order to test her character, accused her of faults that she had not committed. Nevertheless, she took the blame and did not allow bitterness to cloud the sky of her candid soul.

These small sacrifices prepared her, unknowingly, for the great acts of

generosity that she would one day be called to perform.

Model of piety, virtue and modesty

Her devotion to Mary was evident, as one of her classmates testified: “Whenever she spoke of the Blessed Virgin, you could see Heaven in her gaze.”¹

In May, a flower was given every week to the pupil with the best marks. During this month dedicated to Mary, Eugénie worked hard and was happy to offer Her four beautiful flowers. Although she was very little, when she ardently desired a grace, she prayed the whole Rosary for nine consecutive days, to which she added five sacrifices that were particularly difficult for her. And her heavenly Mother always responded.

Later Eugénie would say: “I love Her because I love Her, because She is my Mother. She has given me everything; She gives me everything, and She still wants to give me everything. I love Her because She is all beautiful, all pure. I love Her and I want every beat of my heart to say to Her: My Immaculate Mother, You know well that I love You!”²

After completing her studies, she returned to her parents’ home where she dedicated herself to works of charity and piety, uncommon for her age. Sometimes she visited the sick in the town hospital, encouraging them with her innocent enthusiasm. Other times, she gave up desserts to be able to offer them to the poor. She loved to converse at length on spiritual matters with the sisters who looked after the hospital.

At that time, she also dedicated herself to apostolate with children, teaching them the practice of prayer and catechism with that virtue that so attracts and calms little ones: patience. Her good manners were always edifying and her modesty perfect.

What would the future hold for such a preserved soul? This was



Blessed Eugénie Joubert
in her youth

*Upon discerning her
vocation, Eugénie
set out on the path
of perfection like
a warrior entering
the battlefield,
never looking back*

the question that many asked themselves. She, however, sought to abandon herself to the divine will, and trusted that the Good Jesus would show her the way forward: “I have not yet made any decision; I am looking for where Jesus wants me to pitch my tent.”³ And He would soon reveal it to her.

A vocation takes shape

In October 1893, at the age of seventeen, Eugénie paid a visit to her sister who had joined the newly-founded Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of the Sacred Heart,

which was for her an occasion of immense grace.

Enchanted by the nuns’ way of life, she soon discerned the essence of their vocation: a deep love springing from their devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which animated all their works of apostolate and piety.

Could the Lord be inviting her to “pitch her tent” with these Sisters? The visit left deep impressions on her spirit, as some notes addressed to Our Lady show: “From childhood, my heart, though poor, lowly and earthly, sought in vain to quench its thirst. It desired to love, but only a beautiful, perfect, immortal Spouse, whose love would be pure and immutable.”⁴ It seemed that she had finally found what she had been seeking for years.

The decisive event for her complete surrender to God was a conversation with the founder of the congregation, Fr. Louis-Étienne Rabussier, on July 2, 1895. She would remember this date to the end of her days, for the priest’s words greatly helped her to discern the divine call.

On October 6, 1895, Eugénie entered religious life for good. Grace made her feel the sweetness of a life of obedience, purity and sacrifice. She felt immense joy at having been “admitted into the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph – into this house of fervour, where the only King is Jesus, and where Mary is Queen of all hearts.”⁵

At her leave-taking, her mother advised her: “I give you to the good God. Don’t look back, but be a Saint,”⁶ words that the nun put into practice with exemplary fidelity.

“To conquer oneself to the end”

“To conquer oneself, to conquer oneself until the end,” was her goal from the beginning of her postulancy. To this end, she set out on the path of perfection like a warrior entering the battlefield, as is well ex-

pressed in a short excerpt taken from her writings: "Combat laziness with generosity. Love even more. Sacrifice even more! I must not look at myself, but at the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary. Nothing that love asks is insignificant."⁷

From the very beginning, she showed remarkable seriousness and maturity, far exceeding what is typical for girls of her age. Hers was a way of being that had been forged by the responsibility of a high vocation and enlightened by a vision of life without sentimental illusions. Her gestures and words denoted "a soul that has striven to live with Our Lord in her heart."⁸

She spared no effort to detach herself entirely from creatures in order to keep her heart free for God. One day during Lent when she was acting as porter, she saw a friend she had known in the past approaching, and she said:

"It is in Lent, and visits are not allowed."

With these few words, she closed the door and her friend left without reply.

Attracting Jesus' gaze through humiliations and obedience

Part of the work of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart was to teach catechism to poor children with little education. In the vicinity of Le Puy-en-Velay, the results of this apostolate were excellent. The parish priest of Aubervilliers, wanting to see it bear fruit in the suburbs of Paris, an environment hostile to religion and very much in the thrall of socialist propaganda, called upon the Sisters.

In 1896, seven of them answered the call, among whom was Eugénie, who had just professed her vows. It was an opportunity to prove her love, and she gave herself unreservedly to this mission for four years.

Eugénie never shirked her responsibilities; she gave classes all

day long, sometimes until losing her voice. She had a special gift for captivating children, especially the rough and wild ones, who became docile and affable during her lessons. How did she manage? No one knows... Her seriousness imposed itself without being overbearing, and her sincere smile instilled confidence and respect.

Gradually, she began to raise up little apostles. Once, one of her pupils – perhaps the most boisterous of all – gathered his companions in the street in front of a crucifix. He climbed up on a bench and, raising his voice, asked:

"Who nailed Jesus to the Cross?"

As no one answered, he continued:

"It was we who caused Him to die because of our sins. We have to ask Him for forgiveness!"

And the children knelt down to recite the act of contrition.

Her abode was the Sacred Heart of Jesus and, in the midst of her many duties, she always sought to be more united to Him

In the midst of her apostolic activities, however, a holy concern troubled her: how could she become more united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus? The answer was not long in coming, for a hard trial was soon to begin.

The ascent of calvary

In 1901, Eugénie returned to the house of the Congregation to continue her regular studies. During the preparations for the feast of the Sacred Heart

in 1902, she felt a burning invitation to deepen her union with God. She wished to give everything to Jesus: her will, her freedom and even her life.

On the evening of the feast, the symptoms of the illness that would carry her to eternity appeared, and the diagnosis came promptly: tuberculosis. The young nun was invited by Our Lord to self-immolation in an act of love and abandonment. Faithful to her Beloved, she would refuse nothing: "The cross is the most precious of all gifts, of all diadems. Our Lord loves me and wants to unite me to Himself. Answer: *Fiat*... [...] I will be the little host and the Blessed Virgin will be the priest who will offer it according to Our Lord's desire."

Her life underwent an abrupt change. Victim of a disease that gradually consumed her, the former intensity of her routine of study, work and apostolate gave way to a seeming inaction. To her bodily pains were added those of the soul. Could she bear the interior abandonment that visited her? What value was her vocation if she no longer had the strength to fulfil it?

Nevertheless, having always been magnanimous in small, everyday tasks, at the moment of great adversity her generosity exceeded all expectations.

Amidst suffering, intimate union with the Sacred Heart

Suffering is the means by which Our Lord can raise up those who love Him to unheard-of heights of holiness. And it was no different with Eugénie. Her last days were marked by great suffering.

She was sent to Liège for its more favourable climate, and there she showed a slight but temporary improvement. In the silence and solitude of the infirmary, Eugénie allowed the Lord to take possession of her soul. Her sufferings were re-

warded with a profusion of mystical graces.

She transcribed some of her colloquies with Our Lord during this period; they give us a glimpse of the change which the Redeemer worked in her soul. "My daughter, let Me do what I desire in your heart and in your whole being [...]. From all eternity I have seen your faults, your infidelities. Am I not Master? Am I not free to love your misery, your nothingness? As long as your nothingness is obedient, it is upon it that I carry out my works."¹⁰

She, in turn, asked Him how to repay so many graces. He said: "You will give Me what I give you. You shall love Me with my Heart. You shall obey Me with my will. My desires will be yours, and with Me you will save souls."¹¹

Nevertheless, those days were arduous. "Everything is dry, cold and powerless in my heart. Come, Jesus, have mercy on me!" To which her Master answered, with utmost satisfaction: "Why, my daughter, do you find bad what I find good? The prayer of suffering and sacrifice is more pleasing to Me than contemplation."¹²

"Consummatum est"!

On June 18, 1904, Eugénie was confined to bed, never to arise again. The hemoptysis became continuous. Between each coughing fit, she kept murmuring "All for You, all for You..."

On the 26th her condition worsened and she was given the Anointing of the Sick. The intensification of the



Blessed Eugénie Joubert in the habit of the congregation

Our Lord marked Eugénie's last days with intense sufferings, which served to perfect that soul which had so consoled Him

pain did not dampen her spirits or cloud her hope. One of the witnesses to these moments wrote with admiration: "Our dear sister is enchanting on her deathbed. Peace and joy radiate around her."¹³

Another of those present encouraged her to unite her sufferings to those of Jesus' Passion, to which she replied: "I do this without ceasing in my heart. Suffering without the good God, I could not do it."¹⁴

On July 2, after a period of prayer, Eugénie asked the time. It was ten o'clock in the morning. The answer made her smile broadly: it was exactly the day and hour when, nine years ago, she had answered the divine call to consecrate herself to religious life!

The pains of her agony intensified and her life seemed to be hanging on a thread that refused to break. Between terrible bouts of suffocation, she said almost without a voice: "I can no longer... When will He come?" Our Lord demanded of her every last drop of suffering.

At last, fervently kissing a crucifix and thrice pronouncing the name of Jesus, the twenty-eight-year-old nun exhaled her last breath, surrendering her soul to Him with whom she had become an intimate friend. It was the first Friday of the month, the day dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

Her life, simple and discreet on the surface, but permeated with mystical graces and acts of outstanding virtue, reveals the profound mystery of love that surrounds the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As God, He possesses all things and can do all things. Nevertheless, He desires souls to console Him and on whom He can pour out His goodness, souls who are His friends and are ready to give themselves entirely. ✧

¹ UNE ÉPOPÉE DE VAILLANCE. *La Servante de Dieu Sœur Eugénie Joubert*. Liège: Saint-Gilles, 1927, p.9.

² Idem, p.40.

³ Idem, p.17.

⁴ Idem, p.20.

⁵ Idem, p.24.

⁶ Idem, p.25.

⁷ Idem, p.32.

⁸ Idem, p.27.

⁹ Idem, p.72-73.

¹⁰ Idem, p.77-78.

¹¹ Idem, p.79.

¹² Idem, p.80.

¹³ Idem, p.105.

¹⁴ Idem, p.106.



WINSTON CHURCHILL

The “Old Lion”

The most diverse forms of intelligence, political acumen and courage made Churchill, at the end of the war, the most celebrated among its victors and deserving of our recognition.



Angela Maria Tomé

An article on Churchill in a Catholic magazine? – the reader may wonder upon opening these pages. Indeed, what is it that prompts us to write about the “old lion”? A virtue little practised in our days and which opens veritable treasures to us: admiration. And as the good is eminently diffusive, these lines enable us to practise admiration upon admiration.

Let us explain. Through decades of contact with the oral and written material of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, we were amazed to notice the admiration – with apologies for the repetition – of this great man for certain historical figures, among them, Winston Churchill. It was his wise insight on men and events that aroused our curiosity about this famous statesman.

He thus describes this figure in his older years: “Churchill’s super-expressive physiognomy stood out in a way one would almost call splendid. To shine, it is obviously not enough to be very expressive. It is also necessary to express something worthwhile, and this old English lion did in torrents. His baldness seemed to gleam with vigorous and subtle diplomatic cogitations. His eyes – how much could I say about them! – expressed succes-

sively fascinating depths of observation, reflection, humour and aristocratic gentility. His broad muscular cheeks lost no vigour with age. They were like two facial ramparts, robustly framing a highly intellectual physiognomy. And they lent the face a certain decisiveness and stability, one could almost say perpetuity: an expressive symbol of the centuries-old strength of the English monarchy. His lips, thin and of uncertain outline, seemed to follow the movement of the eyes, and therefore were always ready to open for wry irony, a word of command, a monumental speech... or a cigar.”¹

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill was born on November 30, 1874, in Woodstock, at Blenheim Palace, built by the first Duke of Marlborough, Lord John Churchill. His mother, Jennie Jerome, was the daughter of the financier Leonard Jerome, owner of a multi-million-dollar fortune. Later, after the death of Lord Randolph Churchill, his father, Winston found in her an “ardent ally”, who favoured his plans “with all her influence and boundless energy,”² right to the end.

Combative from childhood

As he himself relates in his book *My Early Life*, as a child he greatly

enjoyed the grand parades in Dublin, where he lived because his father was secretary to his grandfather, the Viceroy of Ireland. This seems to have been the birthplace of his passion for militarism, as a result of which he owned a collection of a thousand toy soldiers with which he simulated parades. Perhaps this was already the beginning of the military future in which he would brilliantly fight in campaigns in India, Egypt, Sudan and South Africa.

Elizabeth Everest, his governess, played an important role in Winston’s upbringing, since his parents, due to the intense social life they led, dedicated little time to their children. His father, especially, treated him with a certain coldness and disdain. His first and closest affection was for Mrs. Everest, who was his devoted educator and confidante until he was twenty. When she passed away, Winston and his brother Jack, who had also been educated by her, endeavoured to provide her with a decent sepulchre, and throughout their lives they carefully maintained it.

From an early age, Churchill was one to overcome adversities. As a schoolboy, the only courses he en-

joyed were English and fencing. His many early school setbacks served as a lesson on how it is possible to learn from failure, as within a few years he became one of the best students in his class. Perhaps it was the memory of those bitter experiences and of the many others he faced throughout his life that led him to say: “The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity; the optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.”

He entered Harrow School, a famous old British college, and later began his military training at Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. On completing his course, he was called to serve as a Second Lieutenant in the British Army’s 4th Cavalry Regiment, The Queen’s Royal Hussars.

Soldier, writer and war correspondent

During the period of leave from the academy – five long months each year – Churchill considered it useful to take part in a “dress rehearsal”. He would thus fulfil an old and vehement desire: “From very early youth I had brooded about soldiers and war, and often I had imagined in dreams and daydreams the sensations attendant upon being for the first time under fire.”²³

Through a friend of his father’s, a British ambassador in Madrid, he then obtained letters of recommendation and set off for Cuba, where the War of Independence was raging. He was accompanied by a friend, on the pretext of sending reports on the conflict to the *Daily Graphic* in London. Amidst the whizzing of bullets, he celebrated his twenty-first birthday.

Later he took part in other military campaigns, one of which was in Afghanistan, then part of British India, working both as a military officer and war correspondent for various newspapers. From this experience, he wrote his first book: *The*

Story of the Malakand Field Force. His narration of exciting war episodes evinces a soul full of ideals and the desire for heroism. After his participation in the Sudan campaign, he wrote another book, in which he wrote about his actions and observations of that period: *The River War*.

In these works, he reveals determination and sagacity in action, qualities that he would demonstrate until the end of his life. However, at no time does he present himself as a “superhero”, but as someone who needs to overcome fear, insecurity and many other obstacles that nature raises against the realization of great ideals.

At the end of this campaign, he wished once again to return to the combat and achieved his objective through his mother’s influential contacts. He went to South Africa to take part, as war correspondent for *The Morning Post*, in the Boer War. As soon as he arrived, he was shot and captured by the enemy and spent a month in prison, from where he miraculously escaped. This resulted in another book: *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria*.

From the battlefield to Parliament

On his return to England, he had become a war hero and famous author at the age of twenty-five! This wealth of knowledge and popularity ensured his success in his election as a Member of Parliament, the beginning of his long political career.

He proved to be an outspoken and energetic politician. He worked hard, while managing at the same time to write articles and books. From there his political career developed rapidly, and he went on to occupy several important posts, making him the man with the greatest number of public offices in England. For sixty years he was a Member of Parliament and, as Prime Minister, he became the symbol of Brit-



Photos: Reproduction

The will to overcome setbacks was a characteristic of Winston Churchill since childhood

Scenes from the life of Churchill: at the age of seven; prisoner of the Boers in South Africa; in the tower of a tank in 1941. In background, planes of the Royal Air Force; previous page, the “Old Lion” in 1941

ish determination during the Second World War.

Dr. Plinio continues his analysis of this brilliant personality: “An authentic member of the English gentry, adorned (this is precisely the term) with the manly charm of a upper-class aristocrat, in Churchill coincided the splendours of university culture, journalistic talent, parliamentary oratory and military glory, with, moreover [something] of the straightforward, practical and disconcertingly active, typical of the American businessmen of the *Belle Époque*.”⁹⁴

His role in guiding Europe in the Second World War was fundamental, employing those personal gifts so well noted by Dr. Plinio. In fact, the latter followed and analysed this bellicose period and Churchill’s political participation in it, step-by-step, in the pages of *Legionário*. Later, in an article published in the *Folha de São Paulo*, Dr. Plinio once again praises this great man: “The most diverse forms of intelligence, political acumen and courage became evident and shone in him to an increasing degree, as the exigencies of the battle demanded it. When the war ended, Churchill was the most famous victor.”⁹⁵

Dr. Plinio further comments: “Sir Winston Churchill attained the apex of human greatness in his country, and attained it deservedly, according to general consensus, by his exceptional talents, the unmatched breadth of his personality, and the merit of the many services he rendered his country during the course of a brilliant political career. Endowed moreover with all the *raffinement* of an excellent traditional education – Churchill is the grandson of a Duke of Marlborough – and of a vigorous and extensive culture, this great statesman also distinguished himself as a writer, a brilliant orator, and one of the finest conversationalists of our time.”⁹⁶

His speeches in Parliament, whose aim, largely achieved, was

to raise the morale of the people in the midst of wartime woes, became memorable. An example is the one of May 13, 1940, when he spoke for the first time as leader of the nation at war: “I would say to the House as I said to those who have joined the government: I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat. We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I will say: it is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength God can give us, to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark and lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word. It is victory. Victory at all costs – Victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival.”⁹⁷

Some of his frequently recalled phrases, such as this one about the agreements and compromises signed between Chamberlain and Hitler before 1939, also became famous: “You were given the choice between war and dishonour. You chose dishonour and you will have war.” Or again: “The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.” He is credited with the expression *Iron Curtain* in reference to the division of Western from Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

These and countless other speeches are understood in the light of Dr. Plinio’s explication: “He was so great in spirit that he could be compared to a table laid for everyone at any time. He served spiritual banquets, intellectual banquets, his table being, in principle, open to all. He could also refuse some. And when he said ‘no’,

it was a ‘no’ that would almost exclude the person from the universe.”⁹⁸

A companion who enhanced him

Churchill married Clementine Hozier in September 1908; from this marriage of fifty-seven years, five children were born. Dr. Plinio offers the following description of this lady: “With a large facial structure and overall build, and a nobly aquiline aspect in her gaze and profile, Lady Churchill united, however, all the genuinely feminine graces. Her aristocratic education communicated to her an evident charm. Her stateliness coexisted elegantly with an attractive affability. In spite of being engaging, she was utterly discreet. And she knew how to be intelligent without competing in any way with her brilliant husband in the eyes of the public. In the harmony of so many almost opposite qualities, everything was *dégagé* and nothing was *recherché*.”⁹⁹

With descriptive flair, Dr. Plinio uses a unique analogy to highlight her role in the life of her husband: “In pictures representing certain great men of the past, the artists liked to accentuate the personage by placing near him, in the background, some column with a beautiful vase of flowers, or some noble curtain. This was Lady Clementine Churchill: the background of a magnificent picture which enhanced so remarkable a husband, [when] there seemed to be nothing that could enhance him.”¹⁰⁰

The famous “Great Tom” announces his passing

Finally, like all the children of Adam, however famous and successful they may have been, Winston Churchill passed away at the age of ninety. This news was widely covered in the newspapers of the day. Among the innumerable tributes of respect and mourning, the *Folha de São Paulo* pointed out: “The immense bell of the Cathedral of St.

In the valleys of mediocrity of his time, Winston Churchill stood out as a man full of qualities worthy of praise

Churchill during a military inspection; in background, the scene of his funeral cortege, taken from the documentary “A Giant in the Century”



Reproduction

Paul, the Great Tom, which is only rung to announce the death of a member of the royal family, the Mayor or Bishop of London, or the Dean of the Cathedral, began to solemnly toll at ten o'clock in the morning to inform the English people of the death of the ‘Old Lion’.”¹¹

Interviewing some of the people who had gathered in front of the great statesman’s residence, the newspapers reported statements such as these: “I take this as the end of an era”; “This is the end of the Great Britain we know from the history books. What a pity, he was a great man.” One lady, for her part, made the sign of the cross and exclaimed: “May God have mercy on his soul; men like Churchill only come along once every century.”¹²

A man full of qualities, contemplated from the divine vantage point

So here we have an admirable man seen by someone who, if

the facts are considered superficially, *a priori* should not take such an attitude. After all, besides Churchill not being a Catholic, his life displays objectionable aspects – and not a few! Dr. Plinio, however, was no ordinary observer...

Adorned by Providence with the gift of wisdom to an eminent degree, which allowed him to analyse the most diverse realities from the divine vantage point, and with the charism of discernment of spirits, which enabled him to supernaturally penetrate that which surrounded him, especially the interior of souls, Dr. Plinio saw in the English statesman much more than his external actions: he contemplated his specific mission within the historical period in which he lived. And in the valleys of mediocrity of his contemporaries, so lacking in true personalities, it cannot be denied that Churchill stood out as a man full of praiseworthy qualities.

Considering Dr. Plinio’s deeply religious and compassionate soul, we can be certain that he raised many prayers to God for the man who was steering the course of world events at that historical juncture, and who in some measure did so satisfactorily.

In view of one or another fidelity of the “old lion” to the role that Providence then destined for him, what must have been the graces he received as he approached his definitive encounter with God? We cannot know, but we are not forbidden to hope that, when we reach Heaven, by the divine mercy we may find there the ideal Winston Churchill, holy, and, like all the blessed, full of gratitude for those who helped him to reach eternal happiness. ✧

¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. A baronesa e a passionária [The Baroness and the Passionária]. In: *Folha de São Paulo*. São Paulo. Year LVI. N.17.792 (Dec. 19, 1977); p.3.

² Cf. CHURCHILL, Winston. *My Early Life*. London: Eland, 2000, p.56

³ Idem, p.69.

⁴ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. A baronesa e a passionária, op. cit, p.3.

⁵ Idem, ibidem.

⁶ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Dignidade e distinção para grandes e pequenos [Dignity and Distinction for Both Great and Small]. In: *Catolicismo*. Campos dos Goytacazes. Year III. N.33 (Sept., 1953); p.7.

⁷ CHURCHILL, Winston. *Speech*, 13/5/1940. In: CANADINE, David (Ed.). *The Speeches of Winston Churchill*. London: Penguin, 1990, p.149.

⁸ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 9/8/1974.

⁹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. A baronesa e a passionária, op. cit., p.3.

¹⁰ Idem, ibidem.

¹¹ PESAR EM TODO O MUNDO: Morre Winston Churchill [MOURNING THROUGHOUT THE WORLD: Winston Churchill Passes]. In: *Folha de São Paulo*. São Paulo. Year XLIV. N.13.007 (Jan. 25, 1965); p.2.

¹² Idem, ibidem.

Boundless Maternal Solitude

Dona Lucilia has always helped, with motherly solicitude, the numerous people who confidently beseech her protection!



Elizabete Fátima Astorino

“**N**ever was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.” These words from the *Memorare* could also be applied to a great devotee of Our Lady like Dona Lucilia, always ready to maternally welcome those who come to take refuge under her shawl. Countless are the favours obtained thanks to her intercession, by virtue of which she has become more and more known.

Overcoming successive obstacles

The solicitude of this compassionate lady was recently shown to the family of Nathalie Maceo, who lives in Santo Domingo, Dominican Re-

public. After experiencing complications during the birth of her second child, Nathalie once again faced various difficulties during the pregnancy of Ana Lucilia, the couple's third daughter.

The series of complications experienced during Ana Lucilia's gestation and birth left no recourse but supernatural assistance

She relates that during the first five months of pregnancy “the amniotic fluid did not increase, but on the contrary it decreased.” As a result, the doctors recommended absolute rest and prescribed a number of medications to be taken daily, in addition to weekly appointments with her physician. If the treatment failed to have the desired effect, it would be necessary to perform a Caesarean section and the probability of the baby's survival was virtually zero.

As the family had experienced the precious intercession of Dona Lucilia in the case of their second child, Nathalie did not hesitate to turn to this good mother again, fully confident that she would come to her



Photos: Reproduction

At left, Ana Lucilia at the apex of her medical complications; at right, the baby just before being discharged from the hospital

aid in this distressing situation. And so it was: ten days later, the pregnancy was stabilized.

However, in the eighth month, she began to have contractions at a dangerously abnormal frequency, obliging her to rush to the emergency room. After analysing the case, the doctor who attended her said that it was necessary to perform a Caesarean section. She explained that the baby would be premature, with her lungs not fully developed, and that she would need to spend several days in intensive care.

“Lord, may Thy will be done”

Soon after birth, Ana Lucilia had a cardiac arrest, and the doctor performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation. As expected, her lungs were very weak and she had to be intubated right away. The mother relates that on that day, even without understanding why God was allowing this suffering to befall the family, she and her husband felt strengthened, and confident in the power of prayer.

The next day, the paediatrician told the parents that the girl had developed pulmonary hypertension and that they needed to increase the dose of oxygen.

While he was explaining the infant’s delicate situation, he noticed that the mother was holding a rosary in her hands, and he said: “We are praying for her, too.” At that moment, Nathalie felt that the Lord was sending the best people to take care of little Ana. She remembered once again the great efficacy of prayer, without forgetting to ask for Dona Lucilia’s intercession.

On the third day, the hypertension worsened and a dangerous bacterial strain was found in her body. It was necessary to increase the amount of oxygen, which caused the perforation of one of her lungs. Furthermore, the doctors informed her that Ana



Nathalie Maceo at home,
with her daughter

*Everyone perceived
that the child’s
survival had been
a miracle obtained
on account of the
intervention of
Dona Lucilia*

Lucilia would have to receive a blood transfusion.

In this situation, the parents decided to take the most important and urgent step: to ask a priest to baptize the infant. Thus, even in the midst of so many torments, Ana Lucilia had the grace of becoming a child of God.

Nevertheless, the couple felt as if they were living an endless nightmare, because on the fourth day of hospitalization their little girl experienced another crisis that re-

quired another resuscitation process, this time done with a manual pump, as the lungs did not react to the ventilators. There was another perforation – this time in the other lung. And, as she could not feed on her mother’s milk, she began to receive special nutrition, injected through her veins.

While expressing admiration for the girl’s remarkable resilience, the doctor felt obliged to tell the parents that medically there was nothing more they could do for their daughter; they could only pray and hope for a miracle. He authorized them to visit her several times a day, giving them to understand that the child could die at any moment. In this heart-breaking situation, they took the attitude of true Christians: “Lord, may Thy holy will be done!” They then began to pray more insistently, imploring divine intervention.

And they were soon answered, as Nathalie tells us: “On the fifth day, the paediatrician called us very early to say that the baby’s colour had improved and she had less need of oxygen. What a great joy for us! It was the first good news we had received since her birth.”

From then on, each day there was an improvement in the clinical profile until, on the thirteenth day, the baby was breathing normally. One doctor who had thought Ana would not survive, astonished to see the happy outcome of the case, commented: “All of this was a miracle.” Later, on seeing the child breastfeeding, another specialist made the same comment: “All of this was a miracle.” This was also the opinion of the nurses, who, when Ana Lucilia was discharged, said, as they bid farewell: “There goes our little miracle.”

“Yes, it was definitely a miracle – a miracle of Dona Lucilia,” Nathalie concludes jubilantly, ending her account.

Victory amidst grave risks

At times, Dona Lucilia puts confidence to the test: she does not seem to completely answer the supplications made to her, in order to encourage trust that her kind assistance will come in the end. This can be noted in the account sent by Sr. Juliane Campos, of the Heralds of the Gospel.

At the beginning of May 2012, her mother, Zuleida Campos, residing in Belo Horizonte (Brazil), then eighty years of age, was on the verge of suffering a stroke because her right carotid artery had a 98% blockage. She needed to undergo a very delicate surgery, all the more so because of her advanced age. The whole family entrusted the case to Dona Lucilia and the pre-operative examinations were started.

In the meantime, acute abdominal pain brought her to the hospital where many gallstones were discovered in her gallbladder, requiring a somewhat urgent surgery to remove it. The doctors found themselves in a serious impasse: if they operated on the gallbladder, the patient might not survive, given the pressure that would be put on the obstructed carotid artery. If they operated on the carotid artery, the gallstones might block the duct, complicating the situation considerably, as there was already an infection due to the existing obstruction.

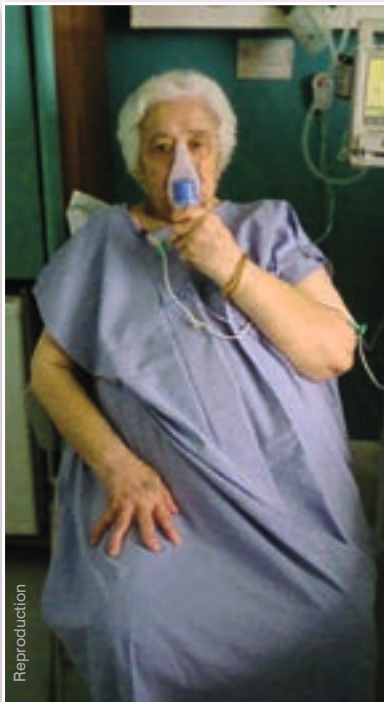
The family was willing to accept the surgeons' decision regarding the sick woman's bodily health, concerning themselves more with the needs of her soul, certain that Dona Lucilia would help them to find a priest to administer the Sacraments, especially the Anointing of the Sick, a task that was not so simple in that region. At last, they found a priest from the Society of the Divine Word who was willing to assist her. The doctors decided to operate on the ca-

rotid artery first, and the operation went very well.

A surprise on the elevator

A waiting period of a few weeks was required before performing the second procedure. Zuleida's recovery was admirably fast and the cholecystectomy was scheduled for mid-June. In principle it would be laparoscopic surgery, and the doctor reassured the patient and her family that it was a simple operation and, if all went well, she would be dis-

Given the grave situation of internal haemorrhage and hypovolemic shock, Zuleida had to be urgently transferred to the ICU



Zuleida, shortly after leaving the ICU

charged within 48 hours and could return home.

Once the surgery had been performed, the doctor emerged from the operating room saying that there had been a small complication, due to the excessive number of stones, which had made it necessary to perform an open cholecystectomy. But, he added, the patient was doing well and was under observation.

To the surprise of the relatives, who were seated in a waiting room located in the elevator lobby, they began to notice unusual movement around the operating room, with nurses and doctors entering and leaving in a hectic manner. Shortly afterwards, the surgeon informed them that Zuleida had suffered an internal haemorrhage in the hepatic region, making a new intubation necessary for a new surgical intervention, and to remove the clots. The bleeding was stopped; however, as she had bled heavily, she had to receive a transfusion of three units of blood. As a result of all this, she suffered hypovolemic shock, her blood pressure dropped to almost zero and, in medical terms, she had to be "resuscitated": with a very high dose of noradrenalin the doctors managed to restore her blood pressure, which was still very unstable and tending to fall.

The surgeon had her transferred to the ICU. There, they would try to keep her alive by means of machines, but did not offer much hope that she would last very long.

Sr. Juliane recalls how, seeing her mother being taken to the ICU on the stretcher, her greatest distress was knowing that she might die without receiving the Sacraments. Had Dona Lucilia failed to assist entirely this time? With anguished soul, she sat down on the couch in the lobby, facing the elevators, and asked her: "Mother, I know it's almost impossible, but please get us a priest!"



Photos: Reproduction

At left, Zuleida with her husband on the day of their diamond anniversary; at right, with her husband and children

Don't let her die without the last Sacraments!"

At that very moment the door of one of the elevators opened, and inside was a priest, perfectly identifiable by his clerical attire. Their eyes met and, seeing the habit of the Heralds of the Gospel that she was wearing, the priest smiled and waved in an affable greeting. Leaping to her feet, she ran to the elevator before the door closed, because the priest had shown no sign of coming out, and said to him, "Father, please visit my mother! She is dying!"

Magnanimity in providing assistance

In a few words the case was explained to the priest, Fr. Nivaldo Magela Rodrigues, who said that he was just then carrying the Holy Oils to a sick woman hospitalized on the ground floor.

It was impressive to see such an immediate response from Dona Lucilia! It was even more impressive to hear the priest say that he had entered the elevator to go downstairs, and did not understand why he had gone up... It was a very clear intervention from Dona Lucilia, confirmed by the priest, who added: "I think I went up because I had to attend to your mother!"

Fully recovered, she was able to celebrate her diamond wedding anniversary with her family and show her deep gratitude to Dona Lucilia

In fact, after overcoming all the obstacles to enter the ICU, the priest, clearly touched, administered the Sacraments with the full ceremonial, following all the rubrics, and even granted the plenary indulgence and the apostolic blessing according to the ritual, because Zuleida was truly dying.

The situation remained tense for several days. Nevertheless, the magnanimity of Dona Lucilia's assistance was complete! After eleven days in the ICU, during which she turned eighty-one, the patient began to show gradual improvement. According to the comments of the team who attended her, she was a living miracle, as, in addition to everything else, she had overcome a hospital infection, pneumonia, pseudomembranous colitis, and pharmacodermia in reac-

tion to the powerful antibiotics. After twenty-six days, she was discharged, having needed several subsequent treatments to overcome the hospital sequelae. Dona Lucilia, however, wanted to grant her full recovery of health, leaving her only a hernia to serve as a reminder of everything that had happened, and her intervention.

In 2017, fully recovered, she was able to celebrate her diamond wedding anniversary – sixty years of marriage – and today, ten years after her crisis, at the age of ninety-one, she is the mainstay of her husband, also a nonagenarian, who suffered a cardiac syncope and a consequent stroke in 2018.

Sr. Juliane concludes her account in this way: "Devotion to Dona Lucilia has only increased over the years in our entire family, and the account given here is nothing more than an expression of deep gratitude to this loving mother."

* * *

The heart-warming reports transcribed here show how Dona Lucilia, reflection of the goodness of the Heart of Jesus, has helped countless souls who ask for her assistance in moments of affliction. May they serve as a stimulus for us to turn to her help whenever we need it, certain that this good lady will come to our aid, whatever our necessity may be. ✧



Caieiras (Brazil)

Homage to the Virgin of Fatima

For the first time after the restrictions imposed by the pandemic were put into place, May 13 was celebrated in person by the faithful, in ceremonies held in several Brazilian cities including Caieiras (SP), Campo Grande, Campos dos Goytacazes (RJ), Cariacica (ES), Joinville (SC), Maringá (PR), Nova Friburgo (RJ), Piraquara (PR), Ponta Grossa (PR) and São José dos Pinhais (PR).

In Spain, there was a solemn Mass in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Almudena, in Madrid, presided over by Cardinal Carlos Osoro Sierra, the Metropolitan Archbishop. Another Eucharistic Celebration was held in Paiporta, in the Province of Valencia.

The Apostolic Nuncio to Guatemala, Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, presided over Holy Mass in the Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in the capital. In Nicaragua, the celebrations were held in San Pedro de Lovago and in Juigalpa, where the head of the diocese, Bishop Marcial Humberto Guzmán Saballo, celebrated in the cathedral.

In Colombia, there were well-attended ceremonies in the country's main cathedral, in Bogotá, as well as in the

cities of Medellín, Tocancipá and Yopal, where more than three thousand five hundred faithful participated in the consecration of families to the Immaculate Heart of Mary carried out by the Diocesan Bishop Edgar Aristizabal Quintero.

In Paraguay, the celebrations took place at the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, in Ypacaraí, presided over by Bishop Ricardo Jorge Valenzuela Ríos, head of the Caacupé diocese.

In Mozambique, the Heralds participated in the national pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Namaacha, enlivening it with their music and carrying the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima. The event, which brought together about eight thousand people, was attended by Bishop Francisco Chimoio, OFM Cap, Archbishop of Maputo.

Ceremonies were also held in honour of the Virgin of Fatima in the capital cities of Uruguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, as well as in Montreal, Canada; in Johannesburg, South Africa; and in four cities of Ecuador: Quito, Cuenca, Guayaquil and Azogues. ✧



Nicaragua



Dominican Republic



Mozambique

Arthur Benedete



São José dos Pinhais (Brazil)



Yopal (Colombia)

Ávaro Parra

Ivano Gavilanes



Medellin (Colombia)



Madrid

Eric Salas



Paraguay

Federico Monzón

Rodrigo Aguilar



Campo Grande (Brazil)



Bogotá (Colombia)

Jesse Ayce

Ronny Fisher



Mexico



Guatemala

Roberto Salas



Ponta Grossa (Brazil)

Gabriel Welter



Perennial Catholic values attract young people to the Church

A report published by the Diocese of Vannes, in France, in preparation for the Synod of Bishops, indicates that young people are increasingly coming to the Holy Church seeking doctrinal clarity, a Liturgy celebrated with sacrality and the visibility of clerics.

This generation, according to the document, has aspirations contrary to those of the previous ones, which “tend to be critical of the Church and her rites, sacrality, the priesthood and the clothing of clerics.”



International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes recommences

From May 13 to 15, thousands of military personnel were able to return to Lourdes to participate in the International Military Pilgrimage, interrupted two years ago due to the pandemic. Instituted after the Second World War, the annual event has become one of the largest celebrations of Catholic soldiers, and this year brought together more than ten thousand three hundred pilgrims from forty-two nations, ranging from combat veterans to active service mem-

bers, many accompanied by their families.

The American delegation prepared three thousand prayer kits – consisting of a rosary, an image of Our Lady of Lourdes, another of Blessed Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus, and a bottle of Lourdes water – to be sent to Ukraine and distributed to soldiers, both wounded and active.

Latin America takes up the Rosary for Men

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20), promised the Divine Master. Inspired by these words, thousands of men continue to spread the Rosary for Men: after spreading throughout Europe, the movement is also gaining new followers in Latin America.

Already very active in Brazil, on May 28, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Puerto Rico and Peru joined the army of prayers, promoting the recitation of the Rosary in public places. In Buenos Aires alone, more than 2,500 men came to the Plaza de Mayo, in front of the cathedral, to pray the Rosary.

Cardinal Zen arrested in Hong Kong

On the morning of May 11, ninety-year-old Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, SDB was arrested by the Chinese police. He was accused of acting as a trustee for a relief fund destined to defray the legal defence expenses of demonstrators arrested for taking part in protests for freedom in Hong Kong. The Cardinal is Bishop Emeritus of the local diocese, which he presided over from 2002 to 2009, never hiding his rejection of communism. After international pressure and the payment of bail, the Cardinal was released around 11pm that same day, but will have to answer to an administrative tribunal.

A few days later, the police of Hebei Province arrested seven priests and ten seminarians of the Xianxian Diocese and, the following day, Most Rev. Zhang Weizhu, its bishop. This ecclesiastical circumscription is not recognized by the Chinese Communist Party which, for this reason, considers all its religious activities illegal and criminal.



Indirect descendant of St. Joan of Arc participates in feast in her honour

The traditional feast in honour of St. Joan of Arc celebrated in Orleans, France this year featured the participation of Clotilde Forgeot d'Arc, a descendant of Pierre d'Arc, brother of the warrior virgin. Clad in armour and carrying a standard, the fifteen-year-old girl paraded on horseback through the city streets representing her holy ancestor.

The commemoration has been held in Orleans for centuries, and since 1945 a young girl from the city has been chosen for this role. Candidates must meet three requirements: be a practising Catholic, have lived in Orleans for at least ten years and be enrolled in one of its schools.

New abbot of Solesmes elected

Dom Geoffrey Kemlin, forty-three years of age, has been elected abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Pierre de Solesmes in France, succeeding Dom Philippe Dupont, who submitted his resignation after twenty years as superior.

orleans-metropole.fr

ordinariato.castrense.pt

Reparation Ceremony Held at the House of the Heralds of the Gospel in Spain

In the early hours of May 16, the house of the Heralds of the Gospel located in Sevilla la Nueva, Spain, was the scene of anti-Catholic vandalism. A group of people could be heard in the early evening uttering words of hatred against God and Our Lady, as well as curses against the Heralds. Only the following day was it discovered that someone had entered the property and destroyed a statue of Our Lady of Graces that stood in the garden, as well as a crucifix that was being restored in a workshop. Pieces of both images were left strewn across the property

According to members of the community, it does not seem misplaced to find the cause of this religious hatred in the highly slanderous news propagated by the media in previous weeks, which aimed to

denigrate the association and drive away its followers in the Iberian nation.

In order to redress this sacrilege, the members of the Heralds of the Gospel joined by their sympathizers organized a solemn ceremony of reparation, which allowed them to demonstrate their love for Jesus and Mary, as well as their condemnation of the profanation committed. The act began with Holy Mass, followed by the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, which was carried in procession, together



Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the presence of the remains of the vandalized images - House of the Heralds of the Gospel in Sevilla La Nueva (Spain)

heraldos.org.uy

with the statue of Our Lady of Fatima, to the place where the destroyed statue of the Virgin had been venerated. There the remains of the vandalized images were placed on an altar for the veneration of all.

The new abbot will also assume the presidency of the Benedictine congregation of Solesmes, to which more than thirty monasteries located in France, Spain, England, Canada and the United States, among other countries, are affiliated; totalling more than six hundred monks under his aegis.

Incorrupt body of St. Isidore on display in Madrid

On the occasion of the jubilee year commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the canonization of St. Isidore the Farmer, patron Saint of Madrid, his relics were displayed for the veneration of the faithful in the

collegiate church dedicated to him in the Spanish capital.

The tomb that holds the incorrupt body of the Saint who died 850 years ago was opened on May 21 and, in just three days, more than thirty thousand devotees, from the elderly to children, stopped to venerate it.




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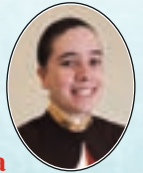


STORY FOR CHILDREN... OR FOR ADULTS FULL OF FAITH?

Pondering Divine Wisdom from the Deep Sea

Gerin declared enthusiastically: “What I really like is when you tell about our family’s past.” To which his kindly grandmother replied: “Well, in that case, it will be a long story indeed! ...”

Jéssica Santana



There once was a family of whales who lived in the peaceful waters of a great sea. Their species was noted for its extremely long lifespan. For them, the age of majority was a thousand years old and they could live for up to three millennia!

As the rays of dawn gradually illuminate the ocean depths, we find the grandmother whale, Grandina, still fast asleep. She is an astounding two thousand eight hundred years old! Suddenly her deep repose is disturbed by some strange movement in the water. Is it a tsunami? Or perhaps a passing war submarine? Nothing quite so serious... It is only her little grandson, Gerin, swimming about with a vigour beyond his seven years of age. He is busy practising acrobatics, and does not even notice that he has interrupted his grandmother’s blissful rest...

Coming up beside her, the youngster begs her to tell him one of her stories.

“What type of story, Gerin dear? Fairy tales, fables, adventures, wars, lives of the Saints...?”

“Grandma, what I really like is when you tell about our family’s past.”

“Oh, well in that case, it will be a long story indeed! Do you know about what happened to your great-grandfather Olinab?”

“No. What era did he live in?”

“It was at a time when humans were displeasing God a great deal with their sins, and were punished by torrential rains that lasted forty days and forty nights! At the Lord’s command, a righteous man, Noah, built a gigantic ark to save his relatives and a pair of every kind of animal.”

“And did great-grandfather get into the ark?”

“No, my child! The entire surface of the earth was submerged in water, so no sea creature needed to enter the ark. But he remained close by, so as to ob-

serve that faithful man. After the deluge, the water still covered the earth for one hundred and fifty days as it slowly subsided. Finally, great-grandfather saw the dove that carried an olive branch to Noah, symbolizing the end of the punishment. And he also beheld the first rainbow that ever appeared in the skies: it was the sign of God’s covenant with living beings.”

“Oh, what an honour for my great-grandfather! What else can you tell me, grandma?”

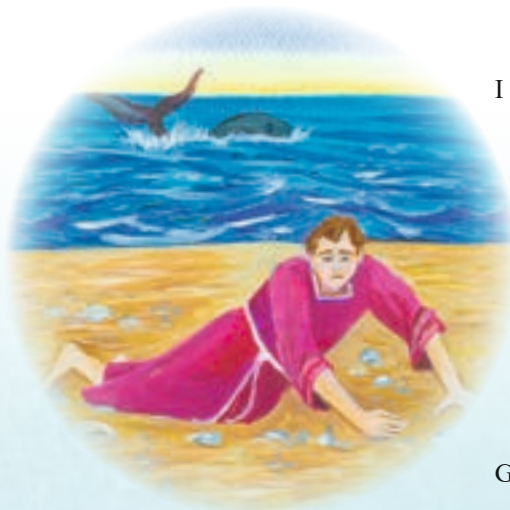
“Something truly historic also happened with my father. A prophet by the name of Jonah disobeyed the command of the Most High, who had sent him as a messenger to convert the inhabitants of Nineveh. Not at all fond of the Ninevites, he shirked his duty and boarded a ship bound for Tarshish.”

“That is terrible! And so God’s will wasn’t done?”

“Ah, my little grandson, when the Almighty wills something, no one



**At the Lord’s command,
the righteous Noah built an ark
to save his family from the flood**



“Then the Lord commanded the fish to vomit Jonah upon dry land”

can stand in His way! He cast a violent storm upon the boat. The sailors would all have drowned if they hadn’t discovered that Jonah was one to blame for the calamity. To escape death, they threw him mercilessly to the waves, and the storm ceased immediately.”

Wondering how the story might end, Gerin asked:

“Did he die, then? And did the Ninevites just keep on sinning?”

“What happened next is the best part! Holy Scripture tells us: ‘But the Lord sent a great fish to swallow Jonah, and he remained in the belly of the fish three days and three nights’ (Jon 2:1). It was my father who swallowed him, dear! And the story continues: ‘Then the Lord commanded the fish to vomit Jonah upon dry land’ (Jon 2:11). Only then did the prophet head to Nineveh. His mission was a success and the fruits of penance and conversion were reaped in that land!”

“It makes me so proud to have an ancestor who served as God’s instrument for the salvation of men! Oh, tell me more! Tell me something about yourself!”

Grandina gazed upward, as she often did when recalling bygone days.

“Several times, when I was young, I watched the travels of a certain Israelite from a distance. He was somewhat short in stature, with a lively gaze and fiery manner. I used to like following him about and, on some occasions, I could even hear his words. Can you guess who it was?”

Gerin thought for a moment, but could not come up with an answer. So his grandmother told him: “It was St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles!”

“Really, grandma? You actually knew him? The saint who had Angels around him to hear him preach the Gospel?”

“Yes, my little grandson! Every day I thank Heaven for that grace! Several times he was even shipwrecked in our waters, but the Lord always saved him in the end.”

And she went on:

“Now let me tell you of an impressive event I witnessed, along with my young, back in the 16th century: It was the naval battle that took place in the Gulf of Lepanto, off the land of Greece!”

The little whale widened his eyes and exclaimed:

“A war at sea? Tell me about it, grandma!”

“The enemies far outnumbered the Christian fleet. I later learned that exactly while the battle was taking place, Pope St. Pius V was offering confident prayers to Heaven. At the decisive moment, just when human hopes were about to surrender in face of the impossible, Our Lady Help of Christians appeared on the horizon and, at the sight of Her, the enemy scattered and was defeated. It was a stunning victory!”

“Wow, grandma, I never heard of that battle before.”

“You’re only seven years old, my dear... There’s still a lot to discover.”

“How I would love to help warriors fight for Christ! What else do you remember, grandma? Do you have any other war stories?”

Grandina drew her grandson under her flipper and gave him an affectionate squeeze, saying:

“The main point of these stories, darling, is the lesson we can learn from them. What lesson do you think we can take from all of this?”

“Um... I don’t know, exactly...”

“This is the lesson, that you too must later pass on: no matter how many zigzags history may take, even if there is infidelity and weakness on the part of creatures, God always guides the course of events for His glory and for the triumph of the Holy Catholic Church. Our species has been privileged to see the Lord showing his constant care cross the centuries, and we praise Him in His greatness! Is that clear, my little dear?”

“Very clear, grandma! I will treasure this precious lesson and one day pass it on to my descendants. Yes, I, too, want to always praise the Most High, recognizing His infinite goodness and wisdom.” ♦



Gerin promised to treasure this lesson: God always guides the course of events for His glory

THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

1. St. Theodoric, priest (†533). Disciple of St. Remigius, who ordained him to the priesthood. First abbot of the monastery of Mont d'Or, near Rheims, France.

2. Blessed Eugénie Joubert, virgin (†1904). Religious from the Congregation of the Holy Family of the Sacred Heart; she taught catechism to children and died of tuberculosis in Liège, Belgium.

3. 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Thomas, Apostle.

Blessed Maria Ana Mogas Fontcuberta, virgin (†1886). Foundress of the Congregation of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Mother of the Divine Shepherd in Fuencarral, Spain.

4. St. Elizabeth of Portugal, queen (†1336 Estremoz - Portugal).

St. Ulric, bishop (†973). Bishop of Augsburg in Bavaria, Germany, who died at 83 years of age after exercising his episcopal ministry for fifty years.

5. St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, priest (†1539 Cremona - Italy).

St. Martha, widow (†551). Mother of St. Simeon Stylites, whom she educated in the Faith.

6. St. Maria Goretti, virgin and martyr (†1902 Nettuno - Italy).

St. Palladius, bishop (†432). Sent to Ireland by Pope Celestine I to preach to the pagans and to combat the heresy of Pelagius.

7. Blessed Benedict XI, Pope (†1304). A friar of the Order of Preachers, during his short pontificate he promoted concord, the renewal of discipline and the increase of religious practice.

8. Sts. Augustine Zhao Rong, priest, and companions, martyrs

(†seventeenth-twentieth century China).

St. Aquila and St. Priscilla. Married couple who welcomed St. Paul into their home and risked their lives to defend him.

9. St. Paulina of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus, virgin (†1942 São Paulo).

St. Joachim He Kaizhi, martyr (†1839). Catechist who was strangled to death for his Faith in Kouy-Yang, a city of the province of Guizhou in China.

10. 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Pascharius, bishop (†seventh century). Bishop of Nantes, France. He sent St. Hermeland, together with twelve other monks of Fontenelle Abbey, to found a monastery on the Island of Aindre.

11. St. Benedict, abbot (†547 Monte Cassino - Italy).



Reproduction

**St. Olga -
St. Sophia Museum, Kiev**

St. Olga of Kiev (†969).

Grandmother of King St. Vladimir, whose conversion opened the gates of Russia to Christianity.

12. St. Viventiolus, bishop (†c. 523). He encouraged the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Lyon, France, to attend the Council of Epaone so as to be more informed about pontifical decisions.

13. St. Henry, emperor (†1024 Grone - Germany).

St. Clelia Barbieri, virgin (†1870). Founded the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Mother of Sorrows, for the catechization of poor girls.

14. St. Camillus de Lellis, priest (†1614 Rome).

In US : **St. Kateri Tekawitha**, vigin (†1680).

Blessed Angelina of Mar-sciano, religious (†1435). As a widow, she lived over fifty years exclusively in the service of God and neighbour, initiating the Order of Franciscan Cloistered Tertiaries.

15. St. Bonaventure, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†1274 Lyon - France).

St. Peter Nguyen Ba Tuan, priest and martyr (†1838). Imprisoned at the time of Emperor Minh Mang, he died of starvation in Nam Dinh prison, Vietnam.

16. Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

St. Teresa Zhang Hezhi, martyr (†1900). Executed along with her two sons during the Boxer persecution in China for refusing to worship local deities.

17. 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Blesseds Ignatius of Azevedo, priest, and thirty-nine com-

panions, martyrs (†1570 Canary Islands - Spain).

St. Hedwig of Poland, queen (†1399). Born in Hungary, she inherited the throne as Queen of Poland and became Grand Duchess of Lithuania through her marriage to Ladislaus II, with whom she established the Catholic Faith in this Baltic country.

18. St. Theodosia, religious and martyr (†eighth century). She suffered martyrdom in Constantinople for opposing the order of Emperor Leo III the Isaurian to destroy an ancient image of Christ.

19. Blessed Peter Crisci, penitent (†c. 1323). After distributing his goods to the poor, he dedicated himself as a caretaker of the cathedral of Foligno, Italy, living in the bell-tower.

20. St. Elijah the Tishbite, prophet.

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

St. Marina or Margaret, virgin and martyr (†date unknown). Died after enduring terrible torture by order of the governor of Antioch.

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

St. Simeon Salus, hermit (†fourth century). When he went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he felt called to abandon the world and withdrew to live in hermetic solitude.

22. St. Mary Magdalene.

Blessed Maria Inés Teresa of the Blessed Sacrament, virgin (†1981). Founded the Congregation of the Poor Clare Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

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

St. John Cassian, priest (†c. 435). After living as a monk in Palestine and a hermit in Egypt, he founded two abbeys in Marseille, France, for men and for women, respectively.

24. 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

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

St. Fantinus, the Elder (†fourth century). Known as *the Wonderworker*, he performed many prodigies in Tauriana, Italy.

25. St. James the Greater, Apostle.

St. Glodesind, abbess (†sixth century). She founded the Monastery of St. Peter in Metz, France of which she was abbess.

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

St. Titus Brandsma, priest and martyr (†1942). Dutch Carmelite, imprisoned and killed in the concentration camp at Dachau, Germany for fighting to defend the freedom of the Church and Catholic schools.

27. St. Simeon Stylites, monk (†459). For many years he lived practising harsh mortifications and continuous prayer on a pillar near Antioch, present-day Turkey.

28. St. Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception, virgin (†1946). To avoid an imposed marriage, she burned her own foot and, being admitted among the Malabar Poor Clares, she lived most of the time ill, offering her life to God. She died in Bharananganam, a town in the State of Kerala, India.

29. St. Martha.

St. Olaf, martyr (†1030). King of Norway, he spread the



Reproduction

Blessed Benedict XI, by Tommaso da Modena - Church of St. Nicholas, Treviso (Italy)

Faith and fought against idolatry in his kingdom. He was run through with a sword by one of his enemies.

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

St. Maria of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, virgin (†1959). Founded the Congregation of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Mexico.

31. 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

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

St. Justin de Jacobis, bishop (†1860). Lazarist religious sent as a missionary to Ethiopia, where he suffered hunger, thirst, tribulations and imprisonment.

God Embroiders Straight with Crooked Lines

Once plain and smooth, the fabric is now embellished with beautiful, carefully crafted designs. Looking at the reverse side, however, we find an intricate tangle of lines...



Heloisa Santana Dias

Many human activities have accompanied the development of civilization in various fields, such as, for example, that of the arts. They have undergone changes and improvements, of course, but their essence remains the same. Among these artistic skills spanning millennia is embroidery.

The origin of this textile craft – which, as everyone knows, involves the use of needlework to embellish fabric with colourful threads, forming designs – is lost in the mists of time. We know, however, that both the Greeks and Romans, as well as the Hebrews themselves, already practised this skill before the advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

It should be noted that this art was not born out of a merely utilitarian need; in itself, it has no practical value... Its purpose is purely aesthetic: by pleasing the senses, it exists in order to delight the higher human faculties as well.

But hidden beneath this pattern of threads which, arranged according to a specific design, adorns a piece of fabric, lies a profound lesson for our spiritual life.

To help us grasp it, let us imagine a simple scene from family life. While

playing on the floor, a child observes his mother who – with a skilful hand and a serene spirit – exercises the craft of embroidery. At first, the little one does not quite understand what is going on... He only sees the under portion of the work and is mystified by the incoherent tangle of threads, which hardly give an idea of the design being formed. “Could this be to hide a tear in the fabric? Or perhaps to disguise a stain?” are some of the possible explanations that cross his mind.

Unwilling to set aside his curiosity for another occasion, the little boy asks his mother what she is really doing. The answer, however, is just a quick glance and a slight smile, while the good lady continues her needlework.

Before long, he is finally able to solve the mystery that so puzzled him! He comes closer and sees a marvellous masterpiece before his eyes, now viewed from above: the piece of fabric, once smooth, is now covered with beautiful, carefully worked figures, although, on the reverse side, there remains an intricate tangle of multi-coloured lines with no apparent logic.

Is this the result of an artistic technique? Undoubtedly, yes. But what

does the divine didactic intend to teach us with it?

You, the reader, and I who write, along with all of humanity, find ourselves in the same situation as that little child: from below we are incapable of knowing the designs that God is “embroidering” from the highest Heaven. He traces out a series of plans which, to our eyes, seem tangled and shapeless. Sometimes we are even tempted to rebel because of the dramas – or the traumas – of our daily life. However, the Lord, who beholds everything “from above”, knows exactly which “threads” must cross our path to make the most beautiful design out of our existence.

For each one of us, it can be extremely difficult to accept this truth. “How much better it would be if we could design our own destiny...” Many times we do not realize that if this were the case, the final work would never reach its greatest perfection, since its author would be man and not the Most High.

“God writes straight with crooked lines,” says the well-known adage, with a great deal of truth. And we could well paraphrase it, applying it to the noble art of embroidery: “God embroiders straight with



Inset, at right: Scenes from the life of St. Martin - Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; at left, the same works viewed from behind; background, detail of embroidery on a canopy made for the crowning of Queen Christina of Sweden - Livrustkammaren, Stockholm

tangled lines.” But is that really so? Or are we the ones who see the divine design in a confused way? Those with faith affirm with certainty: “God embroiders straight with perfect lines.” We, from here below, see them as twisted, but they make up

the magnificent pattern of the existence of each man, called to fulfil the designs of the Father in his regard so as to form the most beautiful piece of embroidery!

If we believe in God’s infinite wisdom and in His love for us, no “crook-

edness” should alarm us throughout our life. On the contrary, having been permitted or planned by Providence, every apparently incomprehensible tangle will turn out to be a true shortcut for us to reach the heavenly Kingdom more quickly. ✧



A Little Child Who Governs the Heart of God

Similar to what the Gospels narrate concerning Jesus, the child Mary grew and became strong as the months went by, full of grace and wisdom in the sight of God and man.

Her kindness, her delicacy, her extraordinary dedication to others and, above all, her spirit of slavery shone before the eyes of her saintly mother, who was filled with admiration at the wonders wrought by the Lord in this divine child. Together with the Angels who, rapt in awe, did not cease for a moment to contemplate Her, St. Anne thought: "Who is this?" Oh! She is the One that only the Almighty could imagine! She is the little child who governs the immense Heart of God!

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