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*The Ideal of Uniting
Heaven and Earth*

“Return to My Heart, Which Is All Yours”

With what affection should we embrace and endure all our afflictions, out of love for Jesus, our Saviour, since He first bore them for love of us! Should they not be most sweet to us, since they have already passed through His most gentle and loving Heart? What a horror we should have of our sins that have caused so many wounds and such intense grief to the divine Heart of our Redeemer!

We read in the life of St. Francis Borgia, of the Society of Jesus, that one day the Saint was speaking in front of a crucifix to a great sinner whom he was exhorting to be converted, but could not soften the hard sinful heart. Suddenly the crucifix – or rather the Crucified Saviour – out of His wondrous and abundant goodness, spoke to the sinner and urged him to follow the advice of His servant. At the same time, there issued blood from all His wounds. This was a sign that our Blessed Saviour was ready once again to shed His Blood and to die for his salvation if need be. But in spite of such miraculous goodness, as the wretched man still remained adamant, there issued a stream of blood from the

wound at His side, which gushed over him and struck him dead on the spot... O God, what a fearful sight!

Let us learn from the foregoing example that it is not our Redeemer's fault if we are lost. There are hearts so hard that, even if Jesus Himself were to come down from Heaven to preach to them, and they were to see Him covered with wounds and bathed in His Blood, they would still not be converted.

O my God, let us not be one of them, but give us the grace to open our ears to the voice of all the sacred wounds of Thy Body and Thy Heart, which are so many mouths through which Thou dost call to us unceasingly:

“Return, ye transgressors, to the heart.” which means to My heart that is all yours, since I have given it entirely to you. Return to that most loving Heart of your Father, which is full of love and mercy for you, which will receive you and welcome you home, heaping upon you all blessings.

✠ ST. JOHN EUDES.

“The Sacred Heart of Jesus”. New York: Kennedy & Sons, 1944, p.38-39



Portrait of St. John Eudes at the age of seventy-two, by Jean Leblond

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OUR READERS WRITE



EXPLANATION OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

I would like to express how thankful I am to receive *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine every month. It is of great spiritual support for the entire family. Nowadays, it is difficult to find Catholic material of such high quality, not only for its photos and illustrations, but also for its articles, interviews and explanations of fundamental truths of the Catholic Church.

It also gives me great satisfaction to see, in the section *Heralds Worldwide*, how your apostolate grows each day and conquers more hearts for Our Lady and the Holy Church.

I thank all the writers, above all Msgr. João, for his *Gospel Commentaries*, which are a true marvel: very profound and detailed, but explained with such simplicity that everyone can understand them.

Continue this great work, so necessary in the present times. In gratitude, I beseech the Blessed Virgin in a special way to help the *Heralds* to continue evangelizing with their example, dedication and charism.

Leonardo Monserrat
Canelones – Uruguay

RELIABLE SOURCES AND SOLID ARGUMENTS

I congratulate the author of the article *Priestly Celibacy – The Value of a Chaste Soul*, for its importance in clarifying doubts on this topic. It was very interesting to see celibacy as part of the virtue of continence. This term was unknown to me as a

virtue until then. An excellent article, based on reliable sources and solid arguments.

Bartolomeu Ailton Arruda
Via revista.arautos.org

A COMPELLING MESSAGE

What fine work writing these *Stories for Children... or for Adults Full of Faith?* And the drawings that illustrate them are beautiful. In the story *Pursued by a Gaze*, the message is striking: Mary always watches over us, for we are her children. In entrusting ourselves to Her, we will be safe, protected by her love, and She will transform our hearts and our lives.

Karen A. E.
Via revistacatolica.org

ENJOYABLE READING, FROM BEGINNING TO END

I want to say, in all honesty, that your magazine *Heralds of the Gospel* is, without doubt, the best Catholic magazine existing in the Portuguese language! The articles on doctrine, *The Voice of the Popes*, lives of Saints, news on miracles, etc. I see you have a special taste for stained-glass windows! I do not subscribe to the magazine, but my son does and, when he comes to visit me, he brings it to me and I read it with great pleasure, from beginning to end!

António Nuno de Sampaio
Porto – Portugal

"MARY'S INDESTRUCTIBLE CHAIN"

In the face of current events, it has never been more important that the children of Our Lady remain united as never before. It is in this union that we will find the strength to advance, to fight and, under Our Lady's

protection, to overcome and together proclaim: "In the end, her Immaculate Heart has triumphed."

Teresita de Jesús Escauriza Troche
Via revista.arautos.org

EYEWITNESS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE "HIPPIE" MOVEMENT

I write these lines as a reader of the magazine impressed by what Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias wrote in his *Gospel Commentary* entitled *Spirit of Love and Peace*.

This commentary made a great impression on me because I am a personal witness of the evolution of the hippie movement.

From 1960 to 1962 I lived in downtown San Francisco, California. I was from Chile and very young; at that time, it was like moving from a small town to a big city. It was a violent shock with the new hippie fashion and all its excesses. However, I was impressed to note that this group, majority Anglo-Saxon and minority Asian, was radiant in their physical appearance.

In 2018 I returned to San Francisco with my wife and son, for them to see, in person, all the wonders and eccentricities I had narrated to them, for years, of my stay there. As we entered the city in a taxi from the airport, we began to see that everything was dirty, graffiti-covered and very ugly, and the streets crowded with drunken and drug-addicted homeless people. As I looked more carefully, I realized that most of them were of Anglo-Saxon origin, but they looked like veritable zombies. I felt like crying when I saw the decadence to which sixty years of the practice of the motto "peace and love" had brought them.

Eduardo Sahr
Santiago – Chile

NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH

The symphony of creation begins with a solemn first movement: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gn 1:1). According to the biblical account, each part of this divine melody was good; only its whole was considered optimal; that is, Heaven and earth only reached their perfection when united to one another.

In Paradise, Adam and Eve enjoyed harmony with the Creator. With original sin, however, man turned toward the earth, was obliged to toil on it with the sweat of his brow, and to return to it as dust. The story of the Old Testament portrays, in varying rhythms, the constant theme of man’s search for his original consonance, struggling against the everyday cacophony.

This duality is already glimpsed in the sons of the first couple: Cain offered rotten fruit from the earth, while Abel presented the first fruits of his flock, like incense raised to the throne of the Most High. Then the world was so buried in sin that God decided to purify it with the Flood. For his fidelity, Noah became the man-nexus of the promise, symbolized by the rainbow, the link that united Heaven and earth. The Tower of Babel, in turn, was humanity’s frustrated attempt to raise itself up by merely material efforts.

In Abraham, the Lord once again restored the covenant. It was given to his grandson Jacob to contemplate the angelic ladder rising up to the Lord. In Moses, the Almighty strengthened the covenant with the chosen people. Of Elijah, it is indicated that he lived for higher realities to such an extent that he deserved to be taken up from this earth...

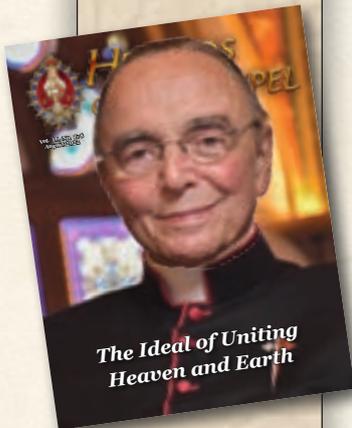
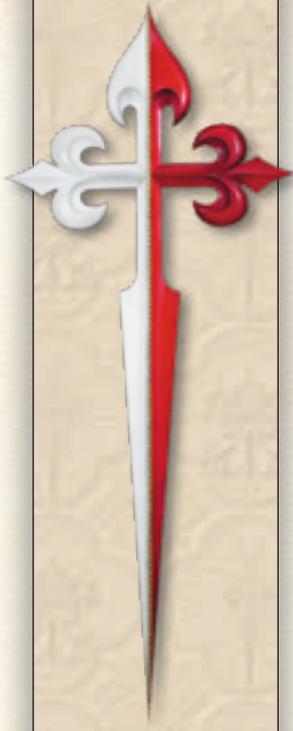
The Incarnation of the Word definitively broke down the boundaries between Heaven and earth. In fact, as St. Athanasius and other Church Fathers comment, God became man so that man might become a god.

However, the demons did not cease to cast mortals into the subterranean abyss, that is, into hell. This is why, in the public life of Jesus, they tried to prevent – through illnesses, possessions, vexations – the encounter of men with the Lord. Until today, the diabolical tactic is not much different...

However, the mission of Jesus did not end with the Redemption. Its consummation will take place in the fullness of time, so as “to unite all things in Him, things in Heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:10). And to this end the Lord left us three extraordinary aids: Mary, the Eucharist and Holy Church.

Our Lady is the Mediatrix par excellence, the Ark of the New Covenant, whose splendours were manifested at the Assumption and in various private revelations. The “Bread of Heaven” is properly *Communion*, which comes down from above so that all creation may be presented anew to the Father (cf. CCC 1359). Finally, the Church has been entrusted with the keys that bind and loose everything on earth and in Heaven (cf. Mt 18:18).

In this perspective, on August 15 we celebrate the birthday of Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, founder of the Heralds of the Gospel, who chose precisely the three aids mentioned above as the pillars of its spirituality. On this date, the institution holds the firm hope that his mission will soon be fully accomplished through a renewed embrace between Heaven and earth (cf. Rv 21:1), that is, the restoration of complete *harmony* in the symphony of creation, manifesting all its beauty and consonance with the Creator. ✧



Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, founder of the Heralds of the Gospel

Photo: Teresita Morazzani



The Father Loves You!

Awareness of God's special love cannot fail to encourage believers to undertake a journey of authentic conversion, by clinging fast to Christ the Redeemer of man.

It may not always be conscious and clear, but in the human heart there is a deep nostalgia for God. St. Ignatius of Antioch expressed this eloquently: "There is in me a living water that murmurs within me: 'Come to the Father.'"¹ "Lord, show me Your glory," Moses begged on the mountain (Ex 33:18). "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known" (Jn 1:18).

So, is it enough to know the Son in order to know the Father? Philip does not let himself be so easily convinced. "Show us the Father," he asks. His insistence brings us a reply beyond all that we could hope for: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). After the incarnation, there exists a human face in which it is possible to see God: "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me" (Jn 14:11). Jesus says this not only to Philip, but to all who will believe. And so, whoever receives the Son of God receives the One who sent Him (cf. Jn 13:20). [...]

Jesus revealed the love of the Father to us

Bringing us the direct witness of the life of the Son of God, John's Gospel points out the road to follow in order to know the Father. Calling upon

the "Father" is the secret, the breath, the life of Jesus. [...]

"The Father loves you" always and for ever: this is the unheard-of novelty, "the very simple yet profound proclamation owed to humanity by the Church."² If the Son also had given us only this word, it would be enough. "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 Jn 3:1). [...]

"The Father loves you!" Awareness of God's special love cannot fail to encourage believers "to undertake, by clinging fast to Christ the Redeemer of man, a journey of authentic conversion... This is the proper context for a renewed appreciation and more intense celebration of the sacrament of Penance in its most profound meaning."³

The origin of every genuine conversion

"Sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons so that they are capable of loving Him and loving one another"⁴; it is refusal to live the life of God received in Baptism, to let ourselves be loved by the true Love. The human being has in fact the terrible power to be an obstacle to God who wills to give all that is good. Sin, which has its origin in the person's free will (cf. Mk 7:20), is failure in genuine love; it wounds the nature of the human per-

son and injures human solidarity by attitudes, words and actions steeped in self-love.⁵

It is in the innermost self that freedom opens up or closes itself to love. This is the constant drama of the human person, who often chooses slavery, subjecting himself or herself to fears, caprices, wrong attitudes, creating idols that dominate and ideologies that degrade his or her humanity.

In John's Gospel we read: "Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" (Jn 8:34). Jesus says to everyone: "Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15). At the origin of every genuine conversion there is God looking upon the sinner. It is a look that becomes a search filled with love; a passion, even that of the Cross; a will to pardon that, showing the guilty one the esteem and love in which he or she is still held, in contrast to the disorder in which they are plunged, calls for the decision to change their way of life. This is the case of Levi (cf. Mk 2:13-17), of Zacchaeus (cf. Lk 19:1-10), of the woman taken in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11), of the thief (cf. Lk 23:39-43), of the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:1-30): "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he



Francisco Lecaros

The Last Supper - Cathedral of St. Mary the Crowned, Gibraltar

does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”⁶

An invitation to stand in front of Christ

The human being who has discovered and experienced the God of mercy and pardon can live only in a state of being continually converted to God.⁷ “Go and do not sin again” (Jn 8:11): pardon is given freely, but the person is invited to respond with a serious commitment to renewal of life. [...]

Before being against a law or a moral norm, sin is against God (cf. Ps 50 [51]:6), against your brothers and sisters and against yourselves. Stand before Christ, only Son of the Father and model for all brothers and sisters. He alone shows us what we must be in relation to the Father, to our neighbour, to society, in order to be at peace with ourselves. [...]

After the Incarnation, there exists a human face in which it is possible to see God: “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me,” Jesus said

Mary: sure way to the merciful Father

Mary sums up in her person the whole mystery of the Church. She is “the highly favoured daughter of the Father,”⁸ who freely accepted and readily responded to the gift of God. “Daughter” of the Father, She merited to become the Mother of His Son: “Let it be to me according to your word” (Lk

1:37). She is the Mother of God, because She is perfectly daughter of the Father. In her heart there is no desire other than that of helping Christians in their commitment to live as children of God. As a most tender Mother, She constantly leads them to Jesus, so that, following Him, they may learn to develop their relation with the Father in Heaven. As at the wedding in Cana, She invites them to do whatever He tells them (cf. Jn 2:5), for She knows that this is the way to reach the house of “the Father of mercies” (cf. 2Cor 1:3). [...]

To Mary I entrust your journeying, and I ask Her to make your hearts ready to receive the grace of the Father, so that you may become witnesses to His love. ✧

Excerpts from:
✧ ST. JOHN PAUL II.

Message on the occasion of the 14th World Youth Day, 6/1/1999

¹ ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH. *Ad Romanos*, 7.

² ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n.50.

³ Cf. CCC 1849-1850.

⁴ Cf. ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Dives in misericordia*, n.13.

⁵ ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Christifideles laici*, n.34.

⁶ CCC 387.

⁷ ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Redemptor hominis*, n.10.

⁸ ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n.54.

“The Transfiguration of Jesus”,
by Fra Angelico - San Marco
Museum, Florence (Italy)



✠ GOSPEL ✠

^{28b} Jesus took Peter, John and James and went up a mountain to pray. ²⁹ While He was praying His face changed in appearance and His clothing became dazzling white.

³⁰ And behold, two men were conversing with Him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His exodus that He was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. ³² Peter and his com-

panions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.

³³ As they were about to part from Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying. ³⁴ While he

was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is My chosen Son; listen to Him.”

³⁶ After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen (Lk 9:28b-36).

What Is the Glory of Heaven Like?

We were created for eternal happiness, but what will it be like? In the Transfiguration, the Divine Master lifts the veil on the eternity that awaits us if we are faithful to Him to the end.



✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I – THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD’S GLORY

In leafing through the pages of the holy Gospels, we see that there is no other Transfiguration of Jesus besides the one of Tabor. It is true that after He resurrected, He appeared to the Apostles in the Cenacle (cf. Mk 16:14-18; Lk 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-29), to St. Mary Magdalene (cf. Mk 16:9; Jn 20:1-18) and to the Holy Women (cf. Mt 8:9-10), but nothing indicates that He showed them the resplendence described in this grandiose scene that we now contemplate. In it, He revealed a diminished reflection of His glory, concealing the plenitude of His splendour.

How can we interpret this sublime episode? What relationship does it have with us, two thousand years later? This passage offers many insights, with useful implications for the spiritual life.

It seems, at first, to have no obvious connection with the Christian vocation, so aptly outlined by the Second Vatican Council: “If therefore in the Church everyone does not proceed by the same path, nevertheless all are called to sanctity and have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God (cf. Rom 12:4-5).”¹

Perfection is not something exclusive to the clergy or religious, but should also shine in the laity, so that the Catholic spirit pervades the temporal reality. To be a saint, it is not necessary to perform miracles, or have extraordinary gifts

or be transfigured, as Jesus was. Even in the Old Testament, God convoked Israel to holiness: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, you shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy’” (Lv 19:1-2). Consequently, it is not easy to establish a strict relationship between the general vocation of the sons of God to holiness and the Transfiguration of Our Lord, a miraculous phenomenon. Let us examine the question more closely.

Three chosen witnesses

^{28b} Jesus took Peter, John and James and went up a mountain to pray.

When did the Transfiguration occur? According to St. Mark, six days, and St. Luke, eight days, after the decisive act in which St. Peter declared Jesus to be Christ, the Son of the living God (cf. Mt 16:13-17; Mk 8:27-30; Lk 9:18-21), and the Divine Master replied: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.” (Mt 16:18). Yet, directly following this, Jesus had foretold the sufferings that awaited Him in Jerusalem, even though His followers had not understood the meaning of His words.

The Apostles had followed Our Lord for some time, but, regrettably, had formed a two-fold vision of Him. One was human, for, having assumed our nature, He suffered the needs of the human state. He felt hunger and thirst; He experienced fatigue, as, for example, in the

At the Transfiguration Our Lord revealed something of His glory, as on no other occasion



dialogue with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (cf. Jn 4:1-26), when He asked her for water as the Apostles went to buy food; or when He slept in the boat (cf. Mt 8:23-24; Mk 4:37-38; Lk 8:22-23).

Alongside these common occurrences were episodes that demonstrated His superiority, such as His spending the entire night in prayer without this affecting His activity the next day (cf. Lk 6:12-13); healing the sick and casting out demons with all ease, by a simple command; and even His teaching a doctrine that was new and different from any school in existence, without having applied Himself to study. Both aspects presented a picture of Our Lord that was difficult to grasp at a glance... He exhibited alternately human and divine facets, and everyone, Apostles and disciples alike, could see that this was the Saviour. Yet because of their erroneous Messianic notions, seeing Him crucified would be a tremendous dashing of their hopes, and a shakeup of their convictions; they would suffer psychological disorientation. Their most ardent desires would clash with the painful outcome of the Passion; when faced with Christ's death the crucial question would arise: Was He or was He not the promised Messiah?

Jesus, the zealous shepherd of His small flock, did everything to prepare them for these impending events. He knew how much they needed reinforcement and encouragement to stand fast in their faith. However, this was not to be given to all equally, as St. Thomas of Villanova affirms, in his explanation for why only three Apostles witnessed the wondrous scene of the Transfiguration: "So that the testimony of what was seen would be more firm and conclusive for the others, it was necessary to have few

witnesses, so that sheer evidence and a high number of witnesses not let them lose the merit of faith."²

Later, these three would sustain the others in their trial, mitigating their feelings of uncertainty at what seemed to be the Messiah's defeat. Thus, supported by the words of those who had witnessed the Transfiguration, all would remain firm in the belief of the divinity of Jesus.

The ones who had been chosen would have to witness many of the humiliations of Our Lord Jesus Christ during the Passion and His Agony in the Garden of Olives. Providence normally asks more sacrifices of those who are more favoured by grace, those who are more loved. And if a person is privy to supernatural marvels, he will very possibly be put to the test to prove his love of God through his love of the cross. When the soul is bent under tribulations and the burden seems too much to bear, that is the time to recall that the cross is the sign of the predestined and that the time of trial foretells the hour of consolation. God always acts with balance, supporting souls in proportion to their needs.

The sight made such a deep impression on these three witnesses that it is narrated in all three synoptic Gospels, as well as in St. Peter's reference to the voice of the Father in his second letter: "We ourselves heard this voice come

Those who witnessed the Transfiguration would be called upon to sustain the others at the time of trial



Gustavo Kralj

Our Lord with the three Apostles after the Transfiguration - Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Russia); in background, Mount Tabor (Israel)

Bennygross (CC by-sa 4.0)



from Heaven while we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2 Pt 1:18).

In his Gospel, St. John also records the splendorous vision of the glory of the Son of God, most likely referring to this episode with these words: “full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (Jn 1:14).

Glory manifested in refulgent light

²⁹ While He was praying His face changed in appearance and His clothing became dazzling white.

Christ chose to reveal His glory “as He was praying.” This is a lesson for us, who often give little importance to prayer, putting the practical concerns of daily life first. Prayer makes our soul celestial; it is vital that we never leave off prayer.

How should Jesus’ dazzling appearance on this occasion be understood? He wished to show a flicker of what we will behold in Heaven. Actually, Peter, John, and James could not have contemplated the divinity of Our Lord with the sense of sight, since it is a reality that lies beyond the grasp of human nature on earth. We will only be able to see it in Heaven, with spiritual eyes. But during the Transfiguration, they captured what the human eye captures, that is, the exterior brilliance of the Sacred Body of the Lord. The glory of the Body was a reflection of the much more splendid glory of the Soul.

The apogee of the Old Law bows before the Gospel

³⁰ And behold, two men were conversing with Him, Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His exodus that He was going to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Moses was the high point of the impressive history of the Hebrew people, marked by great figures such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many others. The life of this providential man is filled with amazing events. He is, perhaps, unequalled in the Old Testament, not only because of his important calling, but also for his intimacy with God, which was such that the Sacred Author affirms:

“Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex 33:11).

Elijah, for his part, whose life was also characterized by divine action and grandeur, was considered the apogee of prophetism, and was revered in a special way by pious Israelites, for his mission was not completed. Despite having been mysteriously taken up in a fiery chariot, the prophet Malachi prophesied his eventual return to fulfil yet another special mission pertaining to the Chosen People (cf. Mal 3:23-24). Because of this set of circumstances, his memory endured almost as if he yet lived among them.

The fact that both appeared on Mount Tabor, undoubtedly assuming an attitude of submission to Jesus – the details of which the simple evangelical narration does not give – was further confirmation to the three witnesses of what the Transfiguration was saying: Jesus Christ is truly the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

An enormous grace that escaped their understanding

³² Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. ³³ As they were about to part from Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying.

Peter’s reaction shows how difficult it was for him to refrain from expressing in words all that unfolded before him. And there was good reason for what he said, for it reflected the desire to perpetuate that state of paradisiacal felicity.

They were enraptured by marvels the likes of which they had never seen, yet they were afraid (cf. Mk 9:5-6), for they still had a degree of attachment to many principles that did not correspond with what was happening in their sight.

The desire for a temporal Messiah who would resolve Israel’s problems was eclipsed by this magnificent scene. In seeing Jesus’ resplendence, they likely did not understand the full scope of the Transfiguration, for they were not yet prepared to assimilate everything He had to impart. The true notion of the Saviour had yet to be formed in their spirits and that episode clashed with the distorted concepts that held sway in their minds.

This contradiction did not keep them from experiencing what a body is like after reuniting

*In the external
resplendence
of Our Lord’s
sacred Body,
the disciples
contemplated
a reflection
of the glory
of His Soul*

Instead of imitating the Apostles' conduct, we should always revolve our lives around the outlook that mystical graces give us

with its own soul. “Now faith” – St. Paul tells us – “is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). And in that instant they had a foretaste of a reality announced by faith, namely, the splendour pertaining to a glorious body.

Grace was not lacking, for if Our Lord transfigured Himself without supporting them with especially sensible supernatural assistance, what good would it do? Reason alone could not sustain them, for these graces with which God educates and leads us to sanctity are essential.

Adoptive sons, God loves us as an only child

³⁴ While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is My chosen Son; listen to Him.”

The phenomenon narrated in these verses took place to ground the tremendous importance of this vision even more deeply in the sensibility of the Apostles. Let us pause to reflect on the word “Son.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son, the only Son begotten of the Father. But we are included in this sonship, for we are adoptive sons of God by Baptism.

We are thus Jesus’ brothers, and part of the divine family. The glory revealed on Tabor was a foretaste of the eternal glory that awaits us, if we are faithful to this sublime condition. For this we must “listen to Him,” for “you have one master, the Christ” (Mt 23:10).

In “My chosen Son,” the Father deposited everything He could – infinite Goodness, Truth and Beauty. To us also, His chosen ones, He



Jesus manifests His glory, detail of the “Transfiguration of the Lord” - Cathedral of Avila (Spain)

grants measureless gifts in Baptism and in all the other Sacraments. It was He Who instilled whatever good is in us, through His love.

To be loved by God is an extraordinary privilege that we should jealously guard, by fleeing from sin. And if we are ever so unfortunate as to lose the state of grace, we should immediately set out to regain God’s friendship, following the path of repentance to the merciful tribunal of Penance.

Consolations do not last forever

³⁶ After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

In this world, every joy comes to an end. After this great mystical experience, the three Apostles had to descend the mount and turn to evangelization with all of its obstacles and difficulties.

When sensible grace ceases we are left with cooperative grace – which never fails – but which requires our collaboration, which is often inadequate. This is where problems start, since in day-to-day life we lack the clarity of understanding of the supernatural life that we have when operative grace is acting in us.³

The Evangelists describe how the Apostles struggled with the topic of Death and Resurrection presented to them by Our Lord on Tabor (cf. Mt 17:21-22; Lk 9:44-45; Mk 9:31-32), tending to interpret what they had seen according to human criteria – in the other evangelical narration they asked one another what “the rising from the dead meant” (Mk 9:10) – and, shortly after, they argued about who would be greater (Lk 9:46).

They had already forgotten the consolations of the Transfiguration. And at the dolorous spectre of Christ’s Passion, they wavered and fled.

There is a lesson in this for our spiritual life. In order not to lose sight of the supernatural and fall into temptation, we should revolve our lives around the outlook that mystical graces provide. They are much more frequent in the spiritual life of the faithful than we imagine, and are valuable aids for persevering through difficult times.

II – A REFLECTION OF THE ABSOLUTE

The Transfiguration gives us an idea of the reflection of the Absolute that awaits those who go to Heaven. Let us keep our eyes trained on this final goal, our resurrection in a state of glory, if by God’s mercy we attain salvation.

For a better understanding of what this state involves, let us first consider the state of the God-Man. He shows Himself to us in a mortal body, but we know that it ought to be glorious,⁴ for several reasons: because of the hypostatic union – that is, the union of the divine with the human nature in the Person of the Word; because His soul never left the beatific vision from the moment of conception; and, finally, by the merits gained by His Death on the Cross.

Obviously, we do not have hypostatic union with a Divine Person, but, respecting due proportions, we are called to see God face to face in Heaven, in addition to profiting from the merits of our Divine Redeemer, transferred to us by His infinite mercy. We have, then, like Jesus, the requisites that guarantee our acquiring a glorious body after the resurrection of the dead.

The Transfiguration gives us an idea of our life in eternity and imparts hope, for, as the Apostle affirms, we will be similar to Christ in the future life and we will triumph with Him, “provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (Rom 8:17).

The three Apostles’ testimony of this miracle sheds light on the happiness of Heaven; Peter was prompted to suggest setting up three tents and staying on Tabor. He felt an inner joy that made him want to remain on the mount and to forget the battles and labours that still awaited him below, just like us when we are filled with supernatural consolation... we wish it would never end!

The heavenly inheritance

Now, as we know, Heaven is the inheritance of the sons of God. To gain a deeper understanding of this truth, we can form a contrast. If we reflect on hell, we recognize the total absence of love there. In that place, no one loves his neighbour; there is crazed hatred for the blessed souls in Heaven as well as for those sharing the same disgrace. It is a perpetual hatred, for everything and everyone.

Life in Heaven, conversely, is an existence of eternal love. Love produces happiness, and this is Heaven’s essence, springing from the beatific vision, for the intelligence has the need to adhere to truth, and the will has the need to love the good within its reach. This aspiration of the powers of the soul is fully satisfied with the attainment of the vision of God Himself.

An image illustrates this reality: when we are offered an appetizing fruit, such as a ripe and fragrant mango, our intelligence perceives its authenticity, which entices our will all the more. And if its taste corresponds with the expectations that we have formed of it, the will and intelligence are attended to, and we feel satisfied.

The existence of evil could be held up to challenge the previous statement, for it seems that when man sins, for example, he loves evil. But, in practicing evil, man deceives himself, in-

Seeing Christ in His splendour gives us an idea of our future state in eternity, for if we suffer with Him we will also be glorified with Him

Timothy Ring



The Apostles behold the dazzling brightness of Jesus, detail of the “Transfiguration of the Lord” - Cathedral of Avila (Spain)

If in this life grasping certain truths brings us joy, what will be our happiness in Heaven, where we will receive a participation in the divine intelligence itself?

correctly believing that he will find good in sin, for he cannot love evil for its own sake or embrace error as such.⁵ False appearances suggested by the senses are what cloud the intelligence and weaken the will.⁶

In theft, to mention a particular sin, the thief wants to obtain a good for himself – the property of another – without the inconvenience and effort of working honestly for it. He knows that this is a violation of God’s Law, a serious transgression against the victim and against order, but he egoistically opts for his own advantage. To quell his troubled conscience, he will devise sophisms to justify the illicit act and cloak it with appearances that seem good, without which he would not be able to commit it. For the same reason, heresy disguises itself as truth in order to achieve free rein: if it flaunted its error without any masks, no one would accept it.

In Heaven, where there is no fraud, Good and Truth are found in essence, and thus, it is impossible for man not to love. Thus, from the moment in which the soul sees God, in the beatific vision, the intelligence and the will immediately adhere to Him, absolutely and irrevocably.

What will heavenly happiness be like?

We were all created for God, and our soul yearns for Him. This plenitude of satisfaction comes from the possession of Him in Heaven. Why plenitude? Because the intensity and the duration of joy depend on the quality of the object possessed. If it is small, with time it fades and we tire of it, as usually happens, sooner or later, with material goods and all worldly things.

Human pleasure is fleeting. Who can listen uninterruptedly to the same music, however beautiful, or look at just one landscape fixedly for years without moving on? In this life, everything eventually becomes tiresome. But not God, because in Heaven He will be seen in His entirety, but not totally. And as He is the supreme Truth and Beauty, He will eternally present us with new aspects, and we will never experience boredom.

“Then,” St. Robert Bellarmine comments, “wisdom will no longer consist in a quest for the divine in the mirror of created things, but in the revealed vision of God’s essence, Cause of all causes, and of the first and Supreme Truth.”⁷

The natural desire to find out and to know is satiated with this vision, for our understanding will be elevated by God’s light – *lumen gloriae* – to the capacity of comprehending Him in the most perfect way possible for our state. And if in this life the notion of certain truths brings us joy, what will be the happiness stemming from the dilation of the human intelligence by a loan of the divine intelligence?

Nevertheless, heavenly happiness would be incomplete if it were limited to heeding only the desires of the intelligence. The will also attains the fullness of its satisfaction therein. The heart needs to love and be loved, and nothing produces so much happiness as fulfilling this ideal, even if in a transient manner. When someone whom we regard highly, especially if they are superior to us in some way, says “I esteem you greatly!” the heart expands with the feeling of being loved. How great our joy will be when God says to us: “My child, I truly love you! I love so much that I created you, and My love instilled in your soul all the good that it has. Come, My child! I am here to be your eternal joy!” St. Alphonsus says that the souls “in Heaven are certain that they love and are loved by God. They see that the Lord embraces them with a great love, which will endure for all eternity.”⁸ This is the happiness in Heaven!

It is a happiness that satisfies without satiating, for it does not produce boredom. Thus, just like the Truth, the Goodness of God is also infinite, always offering man something new and worthy of love. The Saints have created an expressive image to compare eternal delight to a thirst that, being satisfied, is never satiated: a thirst for thirst. “The heavenly goods satisfy, and always give joy to the heart [...]. And, even though they fully satisfy, they always seem new, as if it were the first time enjoying them; we always enjoy them and always desire them; we always desire them and always obtain them.”⁹

III – JESUS WAS TRANSFIGURED FOR EACH ONE OF US

These considerations on the glory of Heaven help us understand the meaning of Tabor. When Jesus transfigures Himself in the sight of the Apostles, He also does – so before each one of us, for the Liturgy enables us to profit, today, from the graces that were poured out two thousand

years ago during that event. We participate in the wonderment of Sts. Peter, John, and James. And from afar we understand, perhaps even better than the Apostles themselves, the message that the Divine Teacher wants to transmit for our benefit.

Every Christian who faithfully follows in the footsteps of Jesus experiences spiritual Tabor moments – moments in which the splendour of Our Lord Jesus is clearly seen. It is the moment of Transfiguration. Such experiences can be felt during liturgical celebrations, when receiving the Eucharist, during a Confession, during a moment of fervent prayer, or even in circumstances that crop up in daily life. The Holy Spirit chooses the time and place to favour the soul with mystical graces. The remembrance of such consolations should be carefully cherished in our memory, like snapshots of life's most special moments in an album, so that these unique moments can be later relived.

The opposite also holds true; the good Christian undergoes “Good Fridays” during his earthly journey, when he most resembles the Saviour. These can consist of simple problems, painful illnesses, family issues, financial setbacks, calamities, disillusionments, deceptions, or tragedies of which no existence is devoid... We can even feel abandoned by God; we can feel that He does not hear our prayer, our cry of anguish, and we are tempted against faith, we waver, and we doubt. Jesus seems so far away. But, the truth is that He is closer to us than ever, even though we do not feel Him at our side.

So, we must make the small effort, which is neither tiring nor toilsome, to recall the moments of transfiguration, in which we felt His help with



Paradise, “Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry” - The Condé Museum, Chantilly (France)

greater intensity, His love for us as a Father and His concern as a Shepherd. This simple recollection will fortify us in faith; it can revive the consolations with which we were favoured in the past and help us to bridge times of aridity or life's trials and tribulations.

The hope of eternal reward is precious encouragement in carrying our daily cross with Christian resignation, just as the three Apostles were the most confident during the Passion because they had witnessed the Transfiguration, and St. John was able to remain at the foot of the Cross on Calvary, beside the Blessed Virgin and Holy Women. Let us give these flashes of Tabor their due value, for they are the key to our spiritual life, the foundation for our perseverance. ✧

side the Blessed Virgin and Holy Women. Let us give these flashes of Tabor their due value, for they are the key to our spiritual life, the foundation for our perseverance. ✧

The “Tabor flashes” that we experience in our spiritual life are the key to our perseverance while living amidst the tribulations of this world

¹ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Lumen gentium*, n.32.

² ST. THOMAS OF VILLANOVA. *Dominica secunda Quadragesimæ*, n.1. In: *Obras Completas*. Madrid: BAC, 2011, v.II, p.735.

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.111, a.2.

⁴ Cf. Idem, III, q.14, a.1.

⁵ Cf. Idem, I-II, q.77, a.2.

⁶ Cf. Idem, q.75, a.2, ad 1; q.77, a.1.

⁷ ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE. *De ascensione mentis in Deum per scalas rerum creaturarum*, gradus XV (Ex consid. magnitud. iustitiae Dei). São Paulo: Paulinas, 1955, p.247.

⁸ ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI. *Sermoni compendiat per tutte le domeniche dell'anno*, Dom. II di Quaresima: Del Paradiso. In: *Obras Ascéticas*. Madrid: BAC, 1954, t.II, p.918-919.

⁹ Idem, p.919.

The Miracle on the Vistula

Amidst Russia's claim to universal rule, the Polish-Soviet War broke out. Faced with the prospect of certain defeat, Poland, and perhaps the world, was left with just one recourse for salvation...



✦ Miguel Ferrari

Nothing seems capable of stopping the Russian advance. In Ukraine the red flag already flutters. Now the Communists head for Poland. After conquering the country, they will soon head west; they wish, after dominating the whole of Europe, to overpower America and Asia as well. The universal expansion of this cancer is just beginning. But to accomplish it, they must first subjugate the Polish obstacle.

Advancing relentlessly, the Red Army reaches Warsaw and initiates a confrontation on the banks of the Vistula River. The Bolsheviks begin to gain the upper hand in the clash. Everyone perceives that the defeat of the Poles is inevitable.

No, this is not a conjecture about the immediate future, but an event that took place a hundred years ago...

The Soviet threat

The Treaty of Versailles, in 1919, finally put an end to the territorial disputes which led to one of the greatest events of the 20th century: the First World War. As a result of

the agreement, the borders of many countries were altered, with Poland being one of the greatest beneficiaries. In fact, since the 18th century this nation had been divided between the Austrian, Prussian and Russian Empires, and the pact restored its independence.

Meanwhile, in the country of the Tsars, another event caught the world's attention: the Communist Revolution. In 1917, the Bolsheviks deposed Emperor Nicholas II and established the Soviet socialist regime under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin. The aim of the Reds was, from Russia, to dominate the whole world: "The interests of socialism and world revolution are above national interests, above the interests of the State,"¹ Lenin affirmed in May 1918. To this end, it was of utmost importance to conquer other territories in order to confront Western capitalism.

Polish-Soviet War

In the thick of Russia's claim to universal rule, the Polish-Soviet War began. Polish General Josef Pilsudski broke through the border of Soviet

Ukraine, together with the Ukrainian nationalist leader Symon Petliura, and advanced on Kiev.

Although the first attack was frustrated and the Polish-Ukrainian phalanxes were forced to withdraw, Lenin used the occasion as a pretext to send in the Red Army in order to sovietize Poland.

The Poles retreated about fifteen kilometres per day. After a series of victories, the Bolsheviks reached Warsaw, commanded by Tukhachevsky, a "twenty-eight year old Soviet 'Napoleon'."² Russian victory seemed inevitable.

Distraught and with no hope of help from other Western countries, thousands of Poles gathered in Częstochowa to turn to the only one who could help them at that moment. She had saved them once before; why would She not do it again?

Our Lady of Częstochowa

The medieval town of Częstochowa, more specifically the monastery of Jasna Góra – Mount of Light – is a great pole of attraction for Polish piety, for the priceless treasure it

Vistula River (Poland)

contains: a miraculous image of Our Lady, also known as the *Black Virgin*.

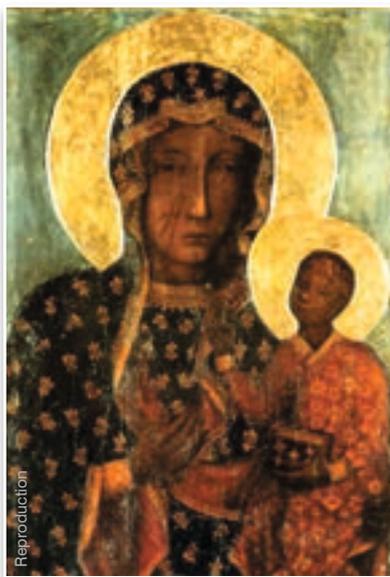
According to pious tradition, it was painted by St. Luke on a table made by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, while the Evangelist was conversing with the Blessed Virgin Mary! St. Helena found the image in Jerusalem and carried it to Constantinople, where it remained for about five hundred years. It then became the object of various endowments and, in the 14th century, came into the hands of the Polish prince Ladislaus Opolszyk.

One day, when Poland was at war with the Tartars, an enemy arrow entered through a window of Ladislaus' castle in Belsz and pierced the throat of the sacred icon.

To protect it, the prince decided to take it to Opal, his home town. However, while making a stop in Częstochowa, he left the image in a small wooden chapel overnight. The next day, as he was getting ready to leave, he picked it up and carried it to his carriage. But to his surprise, his animals refused to move, oblivious to the prodding of the coachmen.

Ladislaus, understanding the will of Our Lady, decided to leave Her in the aforementioned chapel. From then on, the image was called Our Lady of Częstochowa. The monastery and church of Jasna Gora were built around Her, and soon Marian devotion spread throughout the region. Thousands of pilgrims flocked to pray to the Black Madonna.

Before long, She began to work miracles. In 1655, the monastery was besieged by the Swedes, who had conquered Warsaw, Krakow and Poznan. For forty days, a contingent of two hundred soldiers, some nobles



During the communist invasion, the people turned to Her...

Original icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa - Monastery of Jasna Gora, Częstochowa

and seventy monks withstood the siege carried out by more than three thousand men. The battle was miraculously won by the Poles, who attributed the victory to Our Lady. King John II Casimir consecrated Poland to the Virgin Mary, declaring Her as its Queen and Patroness.

In 1920, during the communist invasion, it was to Her that the people turned...

The Battle of Vistula

The final battle took place on August 15, 1920, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the banks of the Vistula River.

Suddenly, the Russian armada began to retreat. The Poles soon launched a counter-offensive which pushed them towards East Prussia. Almost one hundred thousand Russian soldiers surrendered to the Polish army. Some historians claim that, to this day, it seems impossible to

find the cause of the “crushing defeat suffered by the Red Army.”³

However, we disagree. It is impossible for them to find it, because they are looking in the wrong place. What is the use of searching earth for something found in Heaven? On that day Our Lady appeared in the clouds over Warsaw, driving the Communists away. Immediately the victory was attributed to the Black Virgin and the event became known as the Miracle on the Vistula.

Mary is the Queen of history

The Book of Proverbs says: “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord” (Prv 21:31). Human forces were powerless to halt the onslaught of the adversary, but the Queen of Heaven herself, “terrible as an army set in array” (Cant 6:3), decided to intervene.

We might almost say that this is a rule of Marian assistance in every era and on all occasions: it is usually manifested only when men have reached the extreme limit of their efforts and feel themselves overcome by the acrid odour of failure, so that they realize that the victory is due solely to the action of the Virgin.

Thus, even when all seems lost, we can be sure that our Queen and Protectress continues to hold the reins of history in her hands. ✧

¹ PIPES, Richard. *História concisa da Revolução Russa*. Rio de Janeiro: BestBolso, 2008, p.305.

² DANIEL-ROPS, Henri. *A Igreja das Revoluções. II – Um combate por Deus*. São Paulo: Quadrante, 2006, p.318.

³ PIPES, op. cit., p.313.

When St. Michael Descended upon Ireland

Skellig Michael is an island in the Atlantic marked by the mysterious presence of St. Michael the Archangel. While its history dates to the time of St. Patrick, it offers an important lesson for our day.



✦ Sr. Elizabeth Veronica MacDonald, EP

As unlikely as it may seem, the rugged mountain-island seen on these pages is hailed as “a place sanctified by a thousand years of prayer.”¹

Virtually lost in the sea, eleven kilometres off the Irish coast, *Skellig Michael* attracts some eleven thousand people a year who undertake a risky excursion to experience, close-up, the supernatural atmosphere created by events that played out there. And while the constructions at its summit look more like prehistoric beehives than human dwellings, they were built by hands that knew how to join together in works of faith and piety.

Without further ado – even without even having to climb the mossy staircase that twists and turns to the

peak – let us discover something of its history, shrouded in the mists of time...

From darkness to light

Back in the fifth century, the great St. Patrick set about his epic task of liberating the Irish nation from the clutches of paganism.

The land situated at the northwest of Europe, which would later be dubbed the *Isle of Saints*, lay, in those distant times, in the hands of the Druids, the minions of Celtic polytheism. In this context, it fell to the Apostle of Ireland to be, before anything else, its exorcist. Lighting the torch of faith meant first repelling the poisonous snakes, toads, magicians and most of all the invisible spirits that oppressed souls. It

was he who liberated the the people “from the worship of idols and spectres, who conquered and destroyed the idols they had for worshipping; who had expelled demons and evil spirits from among them, and brought them from the darkness of sin and vice to the light of faith and good works.”²

His bold offensive resulted in a resounding victory for the Holy Church. Once the way was cleared, the Word of the Gospel took deep root. The island became a focal point for monasticism for Europe and its missionaries at the vanguard of opening new fields for the Faith.

Many to this day marvel at how one man achieved such lasting success, almost single-handedly. But the humble Patrick never saw his

Skellig Islands, Ireland;
in foreground, Skellig Michael



mission this way. His grandeur essentially lay in his admiring and even being moved by his own littleness, as an instrument of the Almighty. His effectiveness lay knowing who to call in times of trouble!

High King of the Angels

According to tradition recorded in the thirteenth century by Irish monks, St. Patrick had driven the demons to the south-western edge of Ireland onto an isolated crag, more than 11km west of the Iveragh Peninsula, in the Atlantic. The patriarch appealed to heavenly aid, invoking the Archangel St. Michael to expel them definitely.

As he raised his hands aloft, the heavens illuminated and an angelic host appeared on the peak of the mountain under the command of this “High King of the Angels” who fought against the demons, casting them into the sea. After the extermination, the heavenly spirits gathered around their invincible general for the return to Heaven. It is said that the Archangel left his miraculous shield on the mountain.

The point of St. Michael’s sword

That St. Michael has a penchant for the place is suggested even by its geography. The *Skellig Michael* monastery is situated on an invisible line of seven shrines dedicated to St. Michael, stretching from Ireland to Israel, forming a sword-shape on the map.

Along the mysterious and celebrated “Sword of St. Michael,” each location is marked by the special presence and action of the Archangel. Most of these shrines are built on mountains and some on islands, such as the famous *Mont Saint-Michel* on the coast of Normandy and *St. Michael’s Mount* in Cornwall, England. The monastery of *Skellig Michael* finishes the line and is therefore at the “tip of the sword”.



Invoked by St. Patrick, St. Michael appeared with his heavenly host on the island’s peak, casting the demons into the sea

St. Michael defeats the Dragon - National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo

Climbing “Skellig Michael” today

Visiting the locale today is an unforgettable experience. Departing from the mainland by boat is like crossing the Rubicon, for once having set foot on the island the only way is to go onward and upward! As visitors get ready to scale, they are duly cautioned regarding the risks involved and the total lack of tourist amenities on the island...

The view from the peak, however, is ample reward for the perilous climb. At that height tourists have a bird’s eye view – or rather the view of a warrior Archangel! – of the Irish mainland.

There, nature seems imbued with the spiritual beauty of St. Michael. Seabirds soar over the defiant crags, symbolizing the superiority of the Prince of the Heaven-

ly Militia over the infernal abyss. The wind attacks the waves hurling them against the rocks, suggesting the impetus with which the Prince of the Almighty launched himself against Satan. The lightning, and the thunder peals which often crown this scene, evoke the cry of him who was first to defend the rights of the Creator: “*Quis ut Deus?* – Who is like unto God?”

Life in the middle of the ocean

On the dizzying summit, pilgrims encounter a monastery dating to the mid-sixth century and much preserved in its original form. It was likely built under the abbacy of St. Fionán of Clonard, one of the Fathers of Irish monasticism and master of the so-called Twelve Apostles of Ireland.

That generations of monks could have survived and thrived there, two hundred and eighteen metres above sea level gives cause for thought, especially considering the warmth, musicality and sociability usually associated with Irish. What motivated the religious of *Skellig Michael*? Were they some type of “supermen” who awoke in their austere cells keen on descending the six hundred and seventy steps that they themselves had carved into the rock to fish for breakfast? Did they look forward to the perilous forays to adjoining island – *Little Skellig* – to gather eggs for lunch? And what inspired them to add a solitary hermitage in a particularly rugged nook on the southern peak, to the monastery that already boasted cells, oratory, and later on a church?

Such a life can only be understood as the expression of a deep-seated supernatural enthusiasm. The rustic building and the austerity of the customs testify to the faith and the fibre of those souls who made a radical surrender of themselves to God to carve out a life at the edge of the



The constancy of those monks teaches today's Catholics to accompany the Church in her Calvary, with a sorrow that does not limit itself to seeing God offended, but which rises up and cries, "Quis ut Deus?"

Views of Skellig Michael monastery, Ireland

known world up to that time. These men consecrated their existence to drawing down blessing from Heaven on emerging Christendom. Their life was sweetened by the awareness of their link to the Communion of Saints. There were convinced that their every act weighed on the events of Holy Church of their time and of all times.

We glimpse this connaturality with the supernatural in an account of a British traveller to Ireland in the 12th century: "In the southern part of Munster, [...] there is an island with a church dedicated to St. Michael, famed for its orthodox sanctity from very ancient times. There is a stone outside the porch of this church, on the right hand, and partly fixed in the wall, with a hollow in its surface, which, every morning, through the merits of the Saint to whom the church is dedicated is [by a miracle] filled with as much wine as will conveniently suffice for the service of the masses on the day ensuing, according to the number of priests there who have to celebrate them."³

On the forefront in every initiative

From within a routine of prayer, toil and study, the religious built and added to their monastery with ingenuity. The curious cells or *clocháns*, rounded on the outside and rectangular within, wonderfully resisted the lashing Atlantic rains, and served both as living quarters and storage space for a community of twelve. The monks cultivated vegetable gardens behind a wall built to mollify the climate – a "windshield" so effective that their crops gave twice the yield of mainland Ireland. They also developed a sophisticated water purification system.

However, the primary claim of the remote monastery at Skellig is its always having played a pivotal role in life of the Church. The monks of *Skellig Michael* baptized barbarians and the site functioned as a thriving monastic centre until the 13th century, and later a pilgrimage site. During the era of the Penal Laws decreed against Catholics in England and Ireland in the wake of the Protestant Revolution, the island served as a shelter for those determined to

remain united to the immutable doctrine of Holy Church.

Link between past and future

Skellig Michael is a place where Heaven and earth meet. Its legacy lingers on as a link between a blessed past and a glorious future, and the holiness of life lived there is relevant to this day.

Mediocre souls might minimize the need for today's faithful to match the audacity of a St. Patrick or the constancy of the monks who pioneered a Christianizing epic. But the example of these forerunners indicate that authentic Catholics always accompany the Holy Church in Her sufferings, struggles and in her moral demands.

In these days, when, lamentably, she is besieged, persecuted and disfigured, it falls to her children to be with her on her Calvary, pierced with a true sorrow that ought to be "the sorrow of an Archangel, which does not limit itself to seeing God offended, but which rises up and cries, 'Quis ut Deus?' and sets into motion the battle against the devil to cast him into the depths of hell."⁴ ✧

¹ O'DONOGHUE, Noel Dermot. *The Angels Keep Their Ancient Places*. Edinburgh; New York: T&T Clark, 2001, p.4.

² O'DONAVAN, John. *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*. 2.ed. Dublin: Hodges, Smith, and Co., 1856, v.I, p.155; 157.

³ GERALD OF WALES. *Topography of Ireland*. In: WRIGHT, Thomas (Ed.). *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis*. London:

George Bell & Sons, 1894, p.95.

⁴ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conversation*. São Paulo, 13/9/1971.

Under Enemy Fire... and Mary's Protection!

Called to the battlefield, the young seminarian saw one companion after another fall at his side. What would be his fate in this fratricidal war?



✦ Daniela Haiden de Lacerda

During the Great War, Europe set in motion its armed forces, among which the German army stood out for its considerable power.

The circumstances in which the conflict developed forced the rival armies to keep their platoons entrenched on French territory for long months. And given the arduous need to defend themselves, they recruited to fight on those fronts all men fit for combat, which included a large number of university students, recent graduates and even seminarians.

Fr. Paul Forster, a Redemptorist missionary from Landshut, Germany, was one of these conscripts of the German nation. Feeling himself called to the priesthood, he had entered the seminary of the Order at an early age and was looking forward to finishing his studies when Providence unexpectedly changed the course of his life...

Face to face with death

At the age of 26 he was drafted for the war together with two of his companions, also from the seminary, and

on December 30, 1914, the company he had entered was ordered to march to the front. They all knew that this journey meant advancing towards death, since there was little chance of escaping from the trenches alive. On the crude train that transported them, those three friends saw each other for the last time.

Months after their enlistment into the war, Paul's two colleagues gave their lives amidst fierce fighting on the open battlefield. However, as for Paul, he seemed to be encompassed about by a special design. In fact, he



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To be called to the "front" meant going out to meet death, for there was little chance of emerging from the trenches alive

German soldiers in a trench in Aisne (France), during the First World War

possessed something very precious, which certainly drew the gaze of Providence upon him: a deep devotion to Our Lady.

Forster incessantly entrusted himself to the maternal help of Mary, as is revealed in a piece of devotional poetry he composed in May of 1915 when sent to a particularly dangerous post:

If I have to give my life,
for my homeland in the month of
May,
in the glow of a twilight;
dying, I already belong to Thee,
O Mary, my Mother!
When mortally wounded,
Bathed in red blood, I'll exclaim,
there goes the heart of thy child!
Then thou will take me with
Thee,
For to Thee I belong, like
no other.
Though I am far
from thy image,
Thou will always
be close to thy
warrior.¹

Under the protection of his Heavenly Mother, and against all expectations, the young seminarian passed through the war almost unharmed because, in his words, an “invisible hand”² deflected the bullets away from him... Delicate and gentle, but powerful as an army in battle array (cf. Ct 6:9), this hand performed real miracles in his favour, some of which will be recounted in the following lines.

The power of the Rosary in time of danger

One day there was a fierce clash with the French, which ended with a barrage of rotary cannon fire at the crack of dawn, aimed directly at

the flank where Paul was fighting. All around him many were mortally wounded in the head or chest. “I shall never forget,” he relates, “the perforating noise with which a bullet pierced the forehead of my neighbour. I occupied the same elevated position as my companions. I don’t know how I escaped unharmed.”³

The morning after that horrific confrontation, the battalion was summoned by roll call, but many did not answer... “Only one blessed feeling came over all of us: the conviction that we had escaped from a tremendous danger. Above all, I had special reason to be grateful to God and His Blessed Mother,”⁴ the seminarian soldier acknowledged.

Yet another miraculous protection would spare Forster’s life shortly afterwards. Posted as a sentinel during an enemy bombardment, he was to spend six hours on end, practically at the mercy of the French... Grenades and shrapnel whizzed terrifyingly over his head: “The whistling sounds were

incessant and the explosions continuous around me. [...] I finally began to say my Rosary, recommending myself insistently to the protection of the Mother of God. Explosions in my vicinity interrupted me frequently.”⁵

Suddenly, Paul had the idea of changing his position, and he moved forward about twenty-five metres. He stopped in a place from where he could better see the damage his companions were inflicting on the enemy. Moments later, three heavy grenades exploded inside the German trenches, right next to the place he had left a few minutes before... The whole trench was buried! Some of those who witnessed the impressive episode said he was very lucky, but he knew the source of his protection: “I remembered my Rosary.”⁶

Targeted by enemy rifles

Humble and trusting in Heaven’s help more than in his own strength, weapons and skill, Paul confesses that numerous times during his involvement in the war he fully expected to die. And he adds: “But, at the last minute, I always found an open door. The bullet aimed at me always missed its target...”⁷



Many soldiers concluded that Paul was very lucky, but he knew that such protection came from his trust in heavenly aid

Mass on the front line during the First World War;
inset, Paul Forster

Photos: Reproduction

A remarkable event occurred when his detachment had to attack an enemy trench. He recounted: “I attacked from the right. Immediately to my left Lieutenant Dickmann deployed his machine gun and began to fire. However, the flame at the end of the barrel caught the enemy’s attention, and they responded with heavy volleys from their machine guns. The bullets beat furiously against the steel bulkhead. One bullet, however, found the aiming aperture in the shield and instantly killed the officer. The machine gun fell silent. Then the enemy rifles targeted me. The salvos were aimed at me and my companion, John Teufelhart, a young war volunteer. In an instant the poor man lay on the ground with twenty-four bullets in his body. [...] Nothing happened to me...”⁸

Confidence put to the test

Cradled in Mary’s arms, Forster experienced other dangerous situations until, as happens to all those who decide to enter through the narrow gate of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Lk 13:24), his confidence was put to the test.

During an assault on an enemy stronghold, a grenade exploded twenty metres away from where Paul was standing. He felt a sharp blow on his right hand, and then blood trickling down his arm... It was a six-centimetre piece of metal shrapnel that had embedded itself in the palm of his hand, cutting the tendons and nerves of his first three fingers. These soon stiffened and swelled.

Sent to the aid station, the head doctor thought it best to discharge him from the battlefield and send him

back to his homeland, where he would be treated. An immense joy! But at the same time, what a trial... Was there any hope of his hand being restored to its former state? If not, which was almost certain, how could he be ordained a priest? At that time, an impairment such as this constituted a canonical impediment.

In fact, as a result of the accident, the muscle of his thumb, index and middle fingers contracted and, unable to be sutured, ended up losing their flexibility... Nevertheless, zeal for his vocation and his fidelity to Our Lady impelled him to a supreme act of confidence: an appeal to Rome.

When the war ended, Paul presented himself to the Nuncio Eugene Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, then resident in Munich, seeking a dispensation to be ordained. At first the prelate did not give him much hope, but permission was subsequently granted, and the seminarian’s confidence was rewarded!

Throughout his life, Fr. Forster harboured profound and affectionate gratitude to his heavenly Mother, seeking every opportunity to declare it before God and man.⁹

“My Mother, help me!”

“Those who fight under the shadow of the Immaculate do not fear the swords of a thousand soldiers!” says the immortal hymn of the Marian Congregations. Indeed, of what avail



Lúcia Vu

Of what avail are human forces against those who fight under the shadow of the Blessed Virgin?

Our Lady of Perpetual Help - Private collection

are human forces against those who are protected by Our Lady?

The Blessed Virgin did great things for the young Paul – inclined, no doubt, by his priestly vocation, but also by the filial confidence that he placed in Her. She will not fail to do the same for each of her sons and daughters who know how to have recourse to her maternal intercession.

Under enemy fire, whether earthly or infernal, let us not hesitate, therefore, to exclaim with ardent faith and simplicity of heart: “My Mother, my confidence, help me!” ✦

¹ FORSTER, CSsR, Paulo. *Diário de guerra. Minha participação na Guerra Mundial.* São Paulo: [s.n.], 1965, p.90.

² Idem, p.138.

³ Idem, p.71.

⁴ Idem, p.73.

⁵ Idem, p.74.

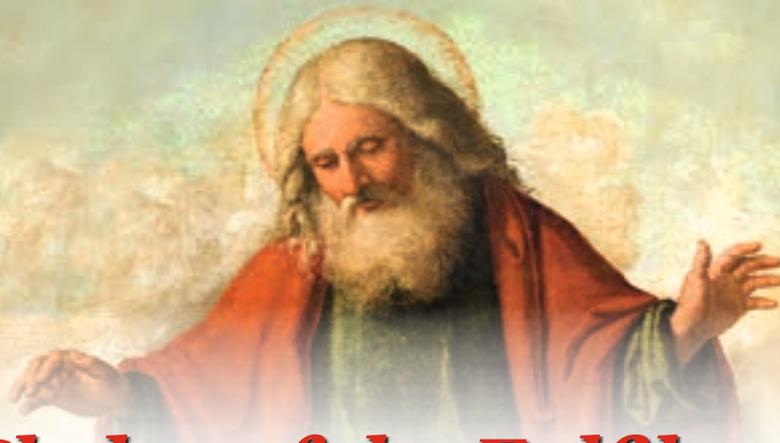
⁶ Idem, p.75.

⁷ Idem, p.137.

⁸ Idem, p.138.

⁹ One of his gestures of gratitude can be found in the Room of Miracles in the National Shrine of Aparecida: having arrived in Brazil as a mis-

sionary, Fr. Paul Forster placed there a military decoration he had received, accompanied by a moving dedication to his Mother and Protector, the Virgin Mary.



Pledge of the Fulfilment of Promises

We are often tempted to think that promises that are slow to materialize will never be fulfilled. However, if they come from God, the long wait is a guarantee of their realization!



✦ **Sr. Juliane Campos, EP**

“My son, if thy mind is to enter the Lord’s service, wait there in His presence, with honesty of purpose and with awe, and prepare thyself to be put to the test. Submissive be thy heart, and ready to bear all; to wise advice lend a ready ear, and be never hasty when ill times befall thee. Wait for God, cling to God and wait for Him; at the end of it, thy life shall blossom anew” (Sir 2:1-3).

Wait for God... How difficult it is for our generation, the children of speed and technology, of the frenzy of a globalized world in which almost everything is known in real time at the touch of a finger on an electronic screen, to understand the deep meaning of these words!

Nevertheless, Sirach conveys to us nothing but words of wisdom, which invite us to a brief reflection.

The greatest test of the elect: to wait patiently

If we peruse the pages of Holy Scripture, we will see how the most important events of humanity took place after an enormous wait. God makes His chosen ones wait. And the great trial is to learn that His time is neither slow nor swift, but perfect: “In Thy sight, a thousand years are but as yesterday, that has come and gone, or as one of the night-watches” (Ps 90:4).

How we suffer with God’s delays! Yet they bring a promise of victory: “Wait for Him; at the end of it, thy life shall blossom anew.” Therefore, “Victory is given to one who suffers with patience. Patience here is not indolence, but that strong virtue by which one endures the pain of the wait. Woe to the man whom the wait does not hurt! Woe to the man who cannot bear the pain of the wait! This

is patience,”¹ states Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, commenting on the passage in question.

The remembrance of the longest waits, considered after many years, carries with it the contentment of unreserved surrender into God’s hands, made both in the midst of consolations and under the weight of sorrow borne patiently. And it brings forth the fragrance of confidence, which is the wake left by hope strengthened by faith. “Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas 1:2-4).

God walks with His chosen ones

When we contemplate certain remarkable episodes in sacred history, we can see how God walks along

these paths with His chosen ones, with decisive steps.

Let us take one of the giants of the Old Testament: Noah. He was “a righteous man, blameless in his generation” (Gn 6:9). At a time when wickedness was rampant in the world, according to the account in Genesis, the only reason the Lord did not exterminate all breathing creatures from the face of the earth was because Noah found grace in His eyes. And God promised him that He would save them, sheltering them in an ark that was to be built, while He destroyed wickedness by means of the flood.

But this “preacher of justice” (2 Pt 2:5) was sorely tested! A hundred years passed in building the ark according to the measures and plans drawn up by the Creator, before anything happened. Noah was subjected to the scorn of his compatriots, without weakening in his faith in the word of the Lord. His long and patient wait was crowned with joy when, at last, after the waters of the flood had subsided and he was able to settle again on solid ground, the divine covenant was sealed with him, symbolized by the beautiful rainbow: “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh

that is upon the earth” (Gn 9:17). The promise was fulfilled!

Paradigm from the Old Testament

Perhaps the greatest paradigm of confident waiting in the Old Testament is Abraham. After the Lord promised him: “I will make of you a great nation” (Gn 12:2), years and years passed without his having any descendants. Led from one place to another, he underwent countless trials; none of them, however, could compare to that of continuing to wait with faith for the fulfilment of a promise that showed no signs of being realized. Finally, God grants him a son: Isaac.

Then came the trial of all trials: the Lord asked Abraham to sacrifice the

The most important events of humanity, such as the flood, took place after an enormous delay. God makes His chosen ones wait!

son of the promise! God seemed to demand from His chosen one the renunciation of what had been promised him. In appearance, He was breaking His own pledged word... The Holy Patriarch does not waver. The patience forged by faith during the long years of waiting leads him to trust the Most High and generously deliver his beloved son to Him. An angel stays the hand bearing the knife, and God is pleased with his faithfulness, renewing the covenant with him: “By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of Heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore” (Gn 22:16-17). “And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise” (Heb 6:15).

His perseverance in waiting was crowned with glory, as St. Leo the Great states on the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, commenting on the visit of the Magi as representatives of all the races of the world: “These peoples were an innumerable offspring promised in other times to the holy patriarch Abraham, offspring which would beget not carnal seed but the fecundity of faith, offspring com-



At left, the building of Noah's Arc - Escorial Museum (Spain); at right, Noah after the flood - Church of San Domingo de Silos, Cordoba (Spain). Previous page, God the Father, by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano - The Courtauld Institute of Art, London

pared to a multitude of stars, so that the father of all nations might hope not for an earthly but for a heavenly posterity. [...] Abraham saw this day and rejoiced (cf. Jn 8:56) when he knew that his children according to faith would be blessed in his offspring, that is, Christ (cf. Gal 3:16), and he saw himself as the future father of all peoples in faith (cf. Rom 4:18).²²

The promise of promises

We could continue considering other Old Testament characters such as Moses, for example, who was given the assurance of the Promised Land and who spent forty years in the desert because of the people's lack of patience in waiting with faith for the fulfilment of God's word. However, for the sake of brevity, let us reflect on the promise of promises, made by God to our first parents while still in Paradise, before sending them to this land of exile: the Redemption, foretold in the Protoevangelium (cf. Gn 3:15), whose fulfilment marked the beginning of the New Testament.

"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets" (Heb 1:1), and not a few were the signs and oracles given about the coming of the Saviour. Among them,

those of Isaiah, the most messianic of the divine heralds, stand out: "In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek" (Is 11:10). However, "all the predictions were put to the test by Heaven, in order to ascertain whether the people of the covenant would be worthy to see their fulfilment."²³ God would demand from His chosen ones a wait of many centuries...

Behold, "a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Is 7:14). Knowing these promises, Mary Most Holy awaited the Redeemer full of faith, and formed in her heart His divine figure, desiring to be the handmaid of Her who would be His Mother. She

Faced with the most painful trial, Abraham believed in the divine promise, and his perseverant wait was crowned with glory

did not imagine, however, that She herself would be the Virgin of Isaiah. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14).

Later, after Our Lord's Passion, the crowning moment of the Redemption, her unflagging faith in the Resurrection gathered the Apostles and disciples once again in the Upper Room, encouraging them to believe despite the apparent contradiction and denial of the facts. Their hope was not disappointed: "The great battle of the Blessed Virgin lay in keeping the flame of the Resurrection alight in those poor souls. Without her intercession, none of them have continued to believe, despite the repeated promises of the Divine Master."²⁴ Together with Her in the Upper Room (cf. Acts 1:14), the Apostles received the promised Holy Spirit and began to spread the Good News, carrying out the Saviour's command: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). The epopee of the Holy Catholic Church had begun.

Hope for the 21st century

Today, after twenty-one centuries of the Church's life, do we still have promises in which to hope, living



At left, God appears to Abraham at Sechem - Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht (Netherlands); at right, the sacrifice of Isaac - San Telmo Museum, San Sebastian (Spain)

against a backdrop of pandemic, war and uncertainty? We have prayed for two thousand years: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven” (Mt 6:10). Can we hope for the fulfilment, in our troubled historical times, of this prayer taught by Our Lord?

Now more than ever is the time to believe and hope! At the beginning of the last century, God sent His own Mother to Fatima, Portugal, to warn humanity about the contemporary evils. “Our Lady at one and the same time explains the reasons for the crisis and indicates its remedy, prophesying catastrophe if men do not hear Her. From every point of view, by the nature of their content and by the dignity of the One who made them, the revelations of Fatima therefore surpass everything that Providence has said to men on the threshold of the great upheavals of history.”⁵

Above all, the Virgin came to bring the promise of the realization of the long-awaited Reign of Christ: “In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.” Mary Most Holy is not capable of deception! She will be “enthroned in men’s hearts as Queen, subjecting them to the dominion of her great and princely Son [...]. *Ut adveniat regnum tuum, adveniat regnum Mariae,*”⁶ teaches St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort.

However, if the final outcome of the Fatima promises is a long time in coming, let us not forget, as Dr. Plinio affirms, that great waits herald how gen-

erous God will be when He answers. “The Lord is not slow about His promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pt 3:9).

It is often for our conversion and increase in love that He makes us wait. “There is a heroic confidence by which one does not give up hope, in spite of everything. This confidence hurts. And the soul is sometimes left in a bleeding state. But even so, it continues to confide and says: ‘That interior, ineffable promise that Our Lady made to my soul, that promise will not fail; I will confide in it!’”⁷

Blessed, then, are those who believe and hope, for what they have been promised will be fulfilled (cf. Lk 1:45). Confident and patient waiting will always be the pledge of the fulfilment of promises! ✧

*Now more than ever
is the time to believe
and hope! For Our
Lady has given us
a promise: “In the
end, my Immaculate
Heart will triumph”*

Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary belonging to the Heralds of the Gospel



Nuno Moura

¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Ai do homem a quem a espera não dói; ai do homem que não aguenta a dor da espera! [Woe to the man whom the wait does not hurt! Woe to the man who cannot bear the pain of the wait!] In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XV. N.172 (July, 2012); p.32.

² ST. LEO THE GREAT. Sobre la Epifanía de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Homilía III, n.2; 5. In: *Homilias sobre el Año Litúrgico*. Madrid: BAC, 1969, p.130; 132-133.

³ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Maria Santíssima! O Paraíso de Deus revelado aos homens* [Mary Most Holy! God’s Paradise Revealed to

Men]. São Paulo: Arautos do Evangelho, 2020, v.II, p.218.

⁴ Idem, p.510.

⁵ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Fátima: explicação e remédio da crise contemporânea [Fatima: Explanation and Remedy for the Contemporary Crisis]. In: *Catolicismo*. Campos dos Goyta-

cazes. Year III. N.29 (May, 1953); p.2.

⁶ ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, n.217. In: *Œuvres Complètes*. Paris: Du Seuil, 1966, p.634-635.

⁷ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conférence*. São Paulo, 7/10/1975.



A Grace that Marked His Life

In a dire circumstance, Our Lady wished to reaffirm to Dr. Plinio her maternal care and predilection, in order to prepare him for all the setbacks and struggles he would have to face during the rest of his life.

✠ **Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP**

On December 2 of 1967, Dr. Plinio was compelled to cancel his customary Saturday meeting, leaving home only in the afternoon, to receive Communion at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church. As he got out of the automobile, those who greeted him were shocked to see him walking with the aid of a cane and wearing a lightweight slipper on his right foot. His face showed signs of exhaustion. But, with unwavering grace, he concealed his indisposition.

On the following day, a Sunday, he could not summon the strength to leave home to fulfil his Sunday obligation, so Holy Communion was brought to him. A person who had the opportunity of spending the morning and afternoon with him said that, when greeting him, he was taken aback by the high temperature of his hand.

Over the ensuing days, the fever would rise above 39 degrees Celsius. Despite this, Dr. Plinio maintained

unswerving amenity, nobility and distinction of manners, as he had learned from his loving mother, Dona Lucilia.

He himself later revealed the heavy tribulation he faced on this occasion:

“When a type of abscess appeared [on the right foot], I immediately recalled the thought I had while assisting the documentary.¹ It seemed to me that something absurd was happening. I was forced to spend several days at home, all the while making every effort to keep Mama from noticing anything. I got around painfully with the aid of certain props.”

As a matter of fact, very early the next day, Monday, Dr. Plinio sought medical aid. He felt as though he were entering a tunnel from which, at first glance, there was no way out. The results of the laboratory exams revealed a serious diabetic crisis. He was told to rest without exception, given a strict diet, medication and glycemic control so as to rapidly quell the physical

disturbances produced by the illness. Nevertheless, a no less tragic problem remained: the development of gangrene on his right foot.

The first treatments were carried out by doctors at Dr. Plinio’s own residence. Afterwards a specialist was called in, and he concluded that urgent surgery was necessary to eradicate the serious infection.

That same night, with due care, Dr. Plinio was transferred to the Syrian-Lebanese Hospital, where he underwent surgery. There he would remain for some days of convalescence.

The greatest ordeal of his life

Nevertheless, the situation continued to be of great concern for Dr. Plinio. He was fully aware of how grave the blow to his health had been and, moreover, saw death near at hand, as he would comment shortly afterwards:

“I asked myself if this was not, at last, the moment at which Our Lady,

being tired of me, was going to set my soul at liberty. That was my great apprehension and my great anguish. But She would protect me even in that extremity, and I would die with my eyes fixed on her mercy.”

Indeed, on his sickbed he had trusted in that mercy and had not feared for his eternal salvation; however, what would become of the institution that he had founded, and was just now beginning to grow? He had always had the presentiment and the hope of seeing his apostolate increase to the point of victory, but now he was attacked by this piercing doubt: were the possibilities of achieving the goal of his mission to be closed off to him? And would his work be reduced to nothing after his death? This is how he expressed his perplexity at that time, when he later made a description of the events of those days:

“I was certain that my death at that juncture would bring about the ruin of the efforts that were just beginning to bear fruit, and which I ardently desired to implement for the greater glory of Our Lady prior to my death.”

However, the worst of his suffering consisted in his relentless self-questioning: Could it be that he was responsible for these events, on account of some lack of correspondence to grace? With the consequence that the work would not fulfil its mission because of him? Could it be that his grave illness was a chastisement from Our Lady? And he asked himself:

“Am I not the wretch, the worst of men, on account of whose infidelity things are not going as they should? That is what torments me the most. For if I knew that my mission was to be completed, I would say to Our Lady: ‘My Mother, I deliver myself into the arms of your boundless mercy. I will expire confiding in your pardon.’ But to think that my plans would not be realized on account of my own fault! That tore at the very depths of my soul.”

A picture coming from Genazzano

December 16, 1967, the first day of the novena of Christmas, was a Saturday. The heat, despite the clouds that obscured the sun, made itself felt even late in the day, making Dr. Plinio’s immobility in bed even more burdensome. He no longer had a fever, it is true, but his constitution was still greatly debilitated. His hair had turned greyer during this period, he had lost weight and his physiognomy was haggard on account of the trauma of his illness and his worries. He remained, however, always affable and paternal with everyone.

Around six o’clock he received a visit from some disciples coming from the state of Minas Gerais who were accompanied by a couple of long-standing members of his work. The Author of these lines, who held the position of expedient, was already in the room.

Dr. Plinio was very pleased to see them and, soon after the conversation began, one of them explained that he had taken advantage of a friend’s journey to Rome to ask him for the favour of purchasing a certain picture, in order to give it to Dr. Plinio as a present.

It was a framed print of Our Lady of Good Counsel of Genazzano, *Mater Boni Consilii*, a copy of the miraculous fresco found there since the fifteenth century. While they unwrapped the packaging, Dr. Plinio remarked:

“I have just finished reading a book about the image of Genazzano.”

Providential reading, a source of consolation

Indeed, eight months previously he had read a work in French concerning the history of Our Lady of Good Counsel written by an Australian missionary priest, Msgr. Dillon,² who had spent a long stay in Genazzano, being



Antônio Carlos Carrero

His health devastated, Dr. Plinio asked himself: “Could it not be that Our Lady, being tired of me, will set my soul at liberty?”

Dr. Plinio in November of 1967; previous page, cover of the book “La Vierge Mère du Bon Conseil”, that belonged to him

witness to one of the miracles that had taken place there. This priest described, in particular, the supernatural phenomenon of the changing of the colours and of the expressions in the fresco, and mentioned the abundance of interior inspirations received by people who had visited it, in conformity with the external changes in its physiognomy. And such changes were also conveyed by means of reproductions of the image of Genazzano.

Despite the ordeals through which he had passed, Dr. Plinio experienced great spiritual joy from reading this work on many evenings prior to going to bed.

Progressing in his reading, he understood the degree to which devotion to *Mater Boni Consilii* was suitable for instilling the virtue of confidence, of which he had such need at that time. And, after having underlined various parts of the book, he dedicated a talk to the history of Our Lady of Good Counsel of Genazzano. He also

made numerous comments about it on the occasion of the symposium attended by members of the group from Minas Gerais, and it was these references that inspired some of them to order a reproduction of the fresco.

The grace of Genazzano: a smile and a promise

Dr. Plinio was almost sitting up in bed, reclining on several pillows, when the portrait of *Mater Boni Consilii* was presented to him. It rested on his legs as he took it into his hands.

Absorbed, enchanted and genuinely emotional, for twenty minutes Dr. Plinio gazed at the picture, without averting his eyes and maintaining a silence that was only interrupted by exclamations:

“What a magnificent image! So striking, so extraordinary! But what a wonder! How expressive She is! Look, it seems as if She is speaking. She is changing colour. Now She has another expression! How generous and maternal She is! She smiles, always ready to help! There are no words; one does not know what to say!”

Indeed, although he had not described everything he saw in the image, all who were present agreed in affirming that the picture of the Most Holy Virgin had had an intense manifestation in his presence, changing its expression and its colours, as if it were in fact smiling. So, without the least doubt, the interior experience that Dr. Plinio was to call the *grace of Genazzano* from that time forward was an authentic and profound mystical grace whose meaning was evident. And one could see his own physiognomy transformed, reflecting an extraordinary consolation, almost an ecstasy!

Later, when the Author had the opportunity to question him about

this, he revealed what had transpired at that time. And he was subsequently to make countless references to this event in conversation as well as in public meetings. “At the moment when I looked at the picture, I had the distinct impression that the image came to life, smiled and made me understand, by the facial expressions, that I should have complete confidence,” he related twenty years later.



In front of a print of the fresco of the Mother of Good Counsel, Dr. Plinio received one of the greatest consolations of his life

Fresco of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Genazzano (Italy)

“I am certain that it was a grace, a promise,” he would always affirm without doubt, and on other occasions he would refer to the “smile-promise of Our Lady.” But what was the promise She transmitted to him?

Without exactly having heard a voice, Dr. Plinio felt in the depth of his soul Mary Most Holy’s caress, whose significance was crystal clear: “My son, do not be disturbed. Confide, because your work will be completed and you will fulfil your mission entirely.” That guarantee was what he had

most desired, for it resolved the terrible question that had been afflicting him.

Furthermore, that interior consolation also brought a special note of encouragement and incentive to his struggle, as he would describe on another occasion: “What was the grace of Genazzano? A specific display of affection, but with the attitude of a Queen who says to her soldier: ‘Do

not panic or retreat, because I take all the responsibility.’ She was entirely and discreetly majestic, grave and maternal, as if to say: ‘You will pass through trials that are going to horrify and terrify you, but remember what I am saying now: I will overcome everything!’” And the message was so clear and well-defined that it left no room for the slightest doubt, something which is characteristic of prophetic communication. “I had the certainty of having clearly heard the words spoken,” he would acknowledge in all simplicity. That grace of certainty acted in his soul in such a way as to give him the ability to carry the burden of his trials with ease, and he told the Author that he sometimes asked himself: being assisted by such certainty, would there be any merit for him in believing that which had been promised to him?

In short, the grace of December 16, 1967 consisted in exactly that confirmation and in the certainty of the total fulfilment of Dr. Plinio’s mission and the continuation of his work, that is, the defeat of the Revolution and the establishment of the Reign of Mary.

Whoever saw him then would have had the impression of looking upon a crusader who, after having walked hundreds of miles and fought countless battles, had finally suc-

ceeded in entering Jerusalem and reaching the Holy Sepulchre where Our Lord Jesus Christ had been entombed. He would have shown every sign of fatigue and of struggle, but he would have felt a tremendous sense of consolation. That is how it was with Dr. Plinio: all of his suffering seemed to have been compensated by the grace he had received, and he was entering into a new phase of his spiritual life.

On the following day, December 17, the surgeon decided that Dr. Plinio's state was sufficiently improved that, contrary to all expectation, he was able to discharge him.

The virtue of confidence throughout his whole life

When conversing with the Author during those days, Dr. Plinio commented that he had studied the physiognomies of the doctors in order to understand his own illness, and that he had perceived that the data obtained by means of his observations did not harmonize with the information they had provided. In other words, he had drawn his own conclusions, and well understood that his recovery was owed much more to the intervention of Our Lady than to their care.

Indeed, the grace of Genazzano had been of fundamental importance to his recuperation. And, from 1967 onward, he was to say many times



“The ears of my soul had understood the promise of my Saviour’s Mother. Therefore, I had to forge ahead!

Dr. Plinio in 1969

that without supernatural help he would have died.

“I would not have survived without the grace of Genazzano,” he would affirm more than fifteen years after the event, subsequently adding: “Without the grace of Genazzano, my heart would have stopped beating a long time ago and I would be dead.” And again: “With so many concerns, if it had not been for the promise of Genazzano I would have died, be-

cause I could not have endured the uncertainties and doubts. But, with that promise, I had a guarantee. I was to continue in peace, seeking to prolong my life, not because my eyes had seen my Saviour, but because the ears of my soul had understood the promise of His Mother. Therefore, I had to forge ahead! And so it was possible to preserve my tranquillity and stability in confidence.”

“When I had fallen ill, even before receiving the grace of Genazzano I perceived that my sole duty was to have a confidence so placid and complete that I never inquired much into my illness. I kept myself informed, but absolutely never agonized over it. And the grace of Genazzano confirmed that demeanour: after I learned of the nature of my infirmity I understood that, if I had been shipwrecked in the maelstrom of despair, the progress of the malady would have been unstoppable.”

And so his life was entirely characterized by hope from beginning to end. And, as ever in defiance of appearances to the contrary, he believed in the interior message given by Our Lady and waited for the fulfilment of her promise. That virtue, infused in his soul at the moment of Baptism, accompanied him in a special way throughout the length of his illness in 1967 and never left him even at the hour of his death.³ ✧

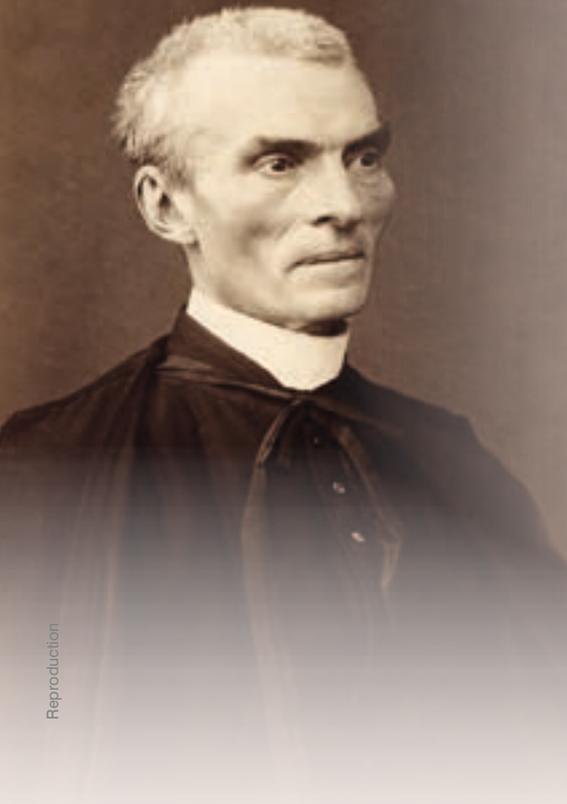
¹ On November 5, 1967, Dr. Plinio attended, in a very prominent place, a solemn Mass celebrated in the Cathedral of São Paulo. Various aspects of the ceremony and of the participants were filmed inside the church and on its steps. A few days later,

Dr. Plinio was invited to watch the documentary. When he saw himself on the screen, he was astonished to see how much his physical vigour had been undermined, probably due to some serious illness.

² This book was *La Vierge Mère du Bon Conseil*, by Msgr. Georges F. Dillon, published by Desclée de Brouwer in 1885.

³ Text taken, with adaptations, from: *Dona Lucilia*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton:

LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, p.618-619; *O dom de sabedoria na mente, vida e obra de Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira*. Città del Vaticano-São Paulo: LEV; Lumen Sapientiae, 2008, v.IV, p.281-295.

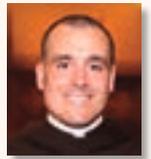


Reproduction

ST. PETER JULIAN EYMARD

Precursor of the Eucharistic Reign

Calling him to found the first Order dedicated specifically to praising the Sacrament of Love, Providence wanted from him, a faith that would never allow itself to be defeated, despite contradictions and denials.



✠ Fr. Ignacio Montojo, EP

A gaunt, white-haired priest of almost sixty years, convinced that he would never reach that age due to the rigours of a life dedicated to an apostolate in which he had kept nothing for himself, converses with a devoted spiritual daughter about this earthly existence already nearing its end. The perplexity of seeing his noblest hopes repeatedly frustrated and the disappointments with which some of his closest friends persistently afflict him cause him to declare: “My consolation is that at the end of all this, there will be the Reign of the Blessed Sacrament. Oh! What thanks, yes, what thanks shall I give then.”¹

* * *

In a humble house in the village of La Mure d’Isère, at the foot of the French Alps, the zealous Marie-Anne searches anxiously for her five-year-old brother, who has disappeared that morning from his mother’s sight. After going through all the rooms of the house and knowing the child’s good inclinations, it occurs to her to look in the nearby church. But neither does she find him there, until her intuition

finally leads her to check behind the main altar. There, kneeling on the platform that serves as a stepping-stool for the priest in the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, she sees the little boy with his head resting on the tabernacle. When questioned, he replies candidly that he is talking with Jesus and has chosen that particular spot: “because I can hear Him better here.”

* * *

Five decades elapsed between this scene and the previous one. Together, however, they summarize the trajectory of a soul who, in the episode of the innocent child already indicated the orientation of his life towards God, and in the humble faith manifested on the threshold of the encounter with Him, attested to the fulfilment of his vocation amidst the contradictions of a frustrated mission. But who is it that we are describing?

Early call to the priesthood

That little boy who, in addition to attending Holy Mass daily, visited the Blessed Sacrament twice a day was called Peter Julian Eymard. With such predispositions, he soon experi-

enced the first stirrings of a priestly vocation in his soul, promising Our Lord, on the day of his First Communion, to follow that path.

He nurtured this vocation at the feet of Our Lady, who had spoken deeply to his soul ever since, not long before, he had begun to make an annual pilgrimage to the distant shrine of Our Lady of Laus. However, the fulfilment of that calling would subject him to harsh trials, since family circumstances demanded his presence at home.

Peter Julian resolutely overcame all setbacks, especially in the struggles against himself. Years later he disclosed that these, especially in the arduous field of chastity, helped to forge his combative character, which greatly benefited the young people who knew him. Finally, at the age of twenty-three, after completing his years as a model seminarian, he received priestly ordination in Grenoble.

Fruitful ministry of a soul always called to give more

Those who analyse the life of the young priest are bound to be im-

pressed by his excellent discharge of every duty to which his superiors assigned him.

However, from his first steps towards the priesthood, Fr. Eymard strongly aspired to the religious life, a desire which he had been unable to fulfil because of poor health and the opposition of his sister. When he met the nascent Society of Mary, the Marist Fathers, he thought he had found the fulfilment of his dream. Once again, as would be the norm in his life, there were many obstacles to overcome, but he obtained the permission of his Ordinary and entered the novitiate of the Order in Lyon.

Fr. Peter Julian's admirable conduct caused his reputation to grow among the Marists. At the age of only thirty-three, he was appointed Father Provincial of the Order, a position immediately below that of Superior General. He also held the office of Visitor General.

The Eucharistic calling

Fr. Eymard's future in the Congregation seemed to have no ceiling, but Providence was calling him *ad maiora*... In fact, although human estimation would have predicted a brilliant ecclesiastical career for him, a certain restlessness haunted his soul. Touched by a singular grace of Eucharistic devotion, he received three profound divine urgings that impelled him to deepen the intimate relationship with the Eucharistic Jesus that had characterized him since childhood.

In 1845, while carrying the monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament in the procession for *Corpus Christi*, he felt a powerful call to place at the feet of the Lord in the Eucharist all the needs of the Church and of the world at that time. In transports of enthusiasm, he promised to devote himself entirely to the ministry of – to paraphrase St. Paul – preaching nothing but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The apostolate carried out by the

Saint in Lyon in consequence of this first resolution earned him the epithet *Father of the Blessed Sacrament*.

But it was in 1851 that intimate mystical graces shaped in his soul the concrete character that his ministry should take, received this time at the feet of Our Lady in her shrine at Fourvière. Years later, he himself wrote of the thoughts that engulfed him then: “It is truly astonishing that, since the institution of the Church, the Holy Eucharist has not had a religious body, its guard, its court, its family, while all the other mysteries of Our Lord have had such to honour and preach them.”²³ Without doubt, Divine Providence forged in Fr Eymard a certainty that would never abandon his soul: “It was necessary that there should be one.”²⁴

Given the state of the world, it became imperative to found a congregation whose members would sanctify themselves through the Blessed Sacrament, be its permanent adorers and bring souls to the altar, reforming society on the basis of Eucharistic Adoration.

A clear vocation, ambiguously outlined

Always docile to Providence, he did not want to take any concrete action until it was clearly indicated to him. For three additional years he devoted himself to his duties with the Marists, endowing his apostolate with a profound Eucharistic character and developing various initiatives in this regard, such as the Eucharistic Days, Nocturnal Adoration and the Forty Hours.

It was only in 1853, during a filial interior dialogue while he was making his thanksgiving at Holy Mass, that Our Lord inspired him, as he later recounted, “to form an Adoration that was perpetual and for everyone,” asking for “an absolute sacrifice, that everything be immolated,” including his life in the Marist Congregation.

He accepted the invitation *ipso facto* and was “overwhelmed with consolation and also with strength,”²⁵ which never left him, so as to withstand all that this commitment entailed.

The Lord called to him from the Sacred Host that rested within him: “Gather to Me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with Me by sacrifice!” (Ps 50:5). However, his insatiably passionate heart was not content with founding a work that would provide the greatest splendour, as never before, for the worship of the Blessed Sacrament. This was only the starting point. His aspiration was to lead all peoples to Him, and in this way reform a society that was heading for complete ruin: “I would still like to do great things for God before I die. [...] I ask God, if there is no pride in this, to grant me a mission that will lead me to do good throughout the whole earth.”²⁶

This strong motion of grace was quite daring for the time and circumstances in which he lived. From his comprehensive purview, the Saint clearly saw what this meant, but he did not shrink back or hesitate to press ahead: “I promised God that nothing would stop me [...]. Above all, I asked [...] for the grace to apply myself to this work without human consolations.”²⁷

A founding strewn with obstacles and failures

Fr. Eymard would take the initial steps towards the longed-for foundation with a retired naval officer, Count Raymond de Cuers, a recent convert who would later become a priest and be his first disciple. To carry it out, however, he had to obtain dispensation from his religious vows in the Society of Mary, where he encountered very strong opposition which cost him great suffering. Many of those whom he still considered his brothers in the community regarded him as a traitor to the vocation, for, they said, he was abandoning the congregation to

launch himself into a merely human project, driven by a desire for personal fulfillment.

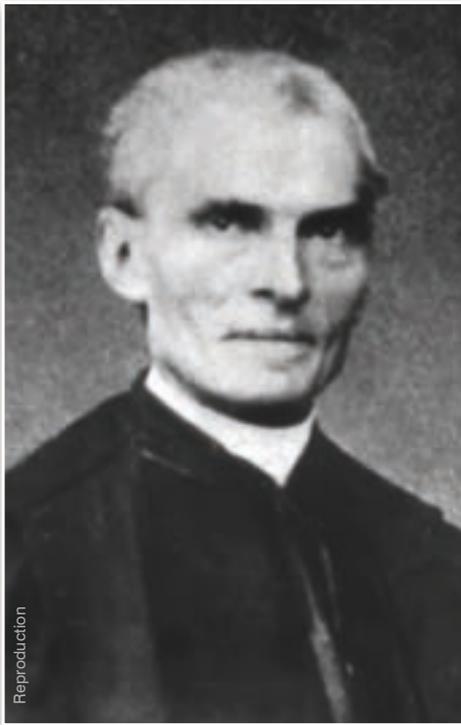
Having finally obtained permission, the two companions set out to accomplish the work to which they aspired, with the blessing of Pope Pius IX, who encouraged their undertaking, and of the Archbishop of Paris. However, their lack of means was such that they often feared for the continuity of their foundation, for they were even evicted from the first house where they gathered. For years on end, they were unable to find a suitable house or a place in which to build the dignified throne they desired for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

This would have been nothing if vocations had been attracted to the new project... But the scarcity was distressing, for the first candidates capitulated before the privations to which circumstances subjected them, thus preventing the establishment of regular adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Worse still, harsh criticism of the nascent work was not long in coming; among the critics were numerous ecclesiastics. Many of them, oh, sorrow, came from his former fellow Marists, who accused him of sowing tares in the Lord's field with the foundation.

Finally came what was perhaps the most painful trial: some thought that all these setbacks, which only increased with the passing of the years, indicated that the work did not have Heaven's blessings. This instilled in the first followers of Fr. Eymard a strong distrust of his role as founder, creating a lamentable void around him. This indisposition was especially felt by the one he considered a true brother, Fr. de Curers, who had accompanied him from the beginning and was now increasingly jealous of him, wanting to appropriate something of the founda-

tional grace that was not his. Finally, under the ridiculous pretence of a more radical dedication to the Blessed Sacrament than that of the Saint, he even separated from him to found his own Eucharistic Order. The incomprehension and comparison of the one who should have been his greatest support, and who even dragged others along behind him, was one of the greatest sufferings that St. Peter Julian had to endure. Never-



The certainty of his calling was met with unimaginable obstacles

St. Peter Julian Eymard

theless, with heroic resignation, he never denied his support and friendship to his old companion.

In the midst of so many obstacles, the work forged ahead. We can understand, however, how far these conquests were from the splendid horizon that had captivated the founder years before. Providence denied him, according to his request, any human consolation. Was He, however, condemning to failure one who had been

such a remarkably successful priest? According to human criteria, perhaps, but from the divine viewpoint, the reality was quite different.

The path of perplexity, guarantee of supernatural success

There is something that causes more suffering to the human heart than any physical pain: contradiction. When the Lord asked Abraham to sacrifice the son of the promise, the patriarch's heart groaned because God's demand contradicted what He Himself had promised.

Why does the Most High do this? He granted man reason so that, in knowing Him, he might love Him. Nevertheless, on certain occasions He demands of His creature such a high degree of surrender that it surpasses the limits of understanding. He asks him to make strides in vast panoramas of faith, but without providing any explanation. Such a demand is presented as a contradiction, or even as a veritable absurdity, before which the poor human intellect feels tiny and powerless.

This was exactly the situation in which Fr. Eymard found himself. In making explicit, by a profound divine inspiration, the sacramental call, he had prophetically contemplated to what pinnacles of love for the Blessed Sacrament his work was to lead the Church and the world, to the point of a complete transformation of society. However, as the years passed, he realized how far the Congregation and the majority of his spiritual sons were from the realization of what the Lord had spoken to him interiorly, to the point that, seeing the end of his life approaching, he confided to them: "I will die, and when I am no longer here, no one will have the grace of the foundation... [...] Therefore, take advantage to ask me and to make great-



João Paulo Rodrigues

“At the end of all this, there will be the Reign of the Blessed Sacrament”

Corpus Christi procession at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

er use of me. I speak to you as much as I can, but you are content to listen to me and let it pass...”⁸

Those whom God chooses to tread the paths of contradiction have only two options: either to rebel, abandoning their first love and joining those who in Heaven cried “*Non serviam*”; or to submit, even amid the fog of incomprehension, joining the myriad who cried “*Quis ut Deus*” and persevered in their fidelity to the One who loved them first. St. Peter Julian Eymard chose to follow the path opened by St. Michael and his Angels.

Final trial and consolation amidst seeming denial

During his life he did nothing but fight, pray and sacrifice himself for the founding of a Eucharistic Kingdom among men: “May the Reign of Thy love come and spread over the whole earth, consuming it with a heavenly and eternal fire.”⁹ And the denial of seeing the fulfilment of this ideal, the more distant the more he

personally strove for it, was undoubtedly a trial to which God subjected him for a very high reason unknown to him. This is the great perplexity of the founders: to contemplate the possibility of establishing a reflection of Heaven in this world, but not to see its complete realization. Nevertheless, in reality, more than their human contributions to the realization of this dream, the Almighty Lord wants from them the perfect oblation of a faith which, despite contradictions, never allows itself to be defeated.

Was there any mystical consolation that sustained the Saint at the end of his days? We are told, for example, of the mysterious apparition in his room of a nimbus, in which his devoted assistant, not particularly inclined to believe such things, was able to see the delicate folds of a garment. Was it Our Lady warning him of his imminent departure and consoling him in this vision? We shall never know for sure. But we can infer that he had such a full assurance, sustained by faith, of the

fulfilment of his mission, that a few days before his death, he affirmed, as we saw at the beginning of this article: “At the end of all this, there will be the Reign of the Blessed Sacrament.”

Whether before or after his passage into eternity, St. Peter Julian Eymard beheld the effect of this holocaust of confidence, consummated with heroism: the monstrance, surrounded with the greatest honour, reigning over a society made up of holiness. His efforts to establish this Eucharistic Kingdom were not in vain. He understood that it was necessary for someone to suffer with a clear understanding of the goal of his anguish: that one man believe in the fullness of such a Kingdom without seeing it in this life, so that others could contemplate its full realization. The founder of the Sacramentines did this to perfection, making a decisive contribution to the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary announced half a century later to the world at Fatima; for the Reign of Our Lady and the Eucharistic Reign are but one. ✧

¹ BLESSED PETER JULIAN EYMARD. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Eucarística, 1953, p.593. The biographical infor-

mation for this article was also taken from this work.

² Idem, p.8.

³ Idem, p.175.

⁴ Idem, ibidem.

⁵ Idem, p.255.

⁶ Idem, p.262.

⁷ Idem, p.256.

⁸ Idem, p.609-610.

⁹ Idem, p.351.

Abortion Law: Law or “Abortion” of Law?

In situations where the public authority attacks non-negotiable principles, the Church’s intervention to demand their preservation is entirely just.



✠ Fr. Bruno Esposito, OP

In his greeting at the end of the *Regina Cæli* of May 22, Pope Francis addressed the participants in the national *Let’s Choose Life* event with these words: “I thank you for your dedication in promoting life and defending conscientious objection, which there are often attempts to limit. Sadly, in these last years, there has been a change in the common mentality, and today we are more and more led to think that life is a good at our complete disposal, that we can choose to manipulate, to give birth or take life as we please, as if it were the exclusive consequence of individual choice. Let us remember that life is a gift from God! It is always sacred and inviolable, and we cannot silence the voice of conscience.”¹

This clear intervention of the Pontiff regarding the sacredness of life occurred when it seemed certain that the Supreme Court of the United States would re-examine the historic *Roe v. Wade*² judgement, which forty-nine years ago gave abortion de facto legalization at the federal level.

Thus, while deeply and sincerely respecting diversity of opinion, and precisely for this reason – so as not to develop and justify a kind of “one-way pluralism” in this regard, whereby in the end only one opinion, that of

the “dominant culture” or of the majority, is accepted and has the right of citizenship – I believe that it is not superfluous to take advantage of the Holy Father’s intervention and the decision of the Supreme Court as a favourable moment to calmly reflect on the legality of a law that permits abortion, and not to take as settled that which, in reality, can never be considered such, since we are dealing with the life of a person, and an *innocent one* at that.

The duty to intervene, not merely to claim a right

I would like to share some simple reflections concerning, first of all, the preliminary and more general question about the right of the Magisterium to intervene in the political arena when the life and dignity of the human person are at stake. I will then try to apply this thesis to the law on abortion, which unfortunately has long been part of the legislation of many States. It is increasingly seen by public opinion as “definitive” and a fruit of modernity and civilization – legal and therefore licit in the moral sphere.

On the first point, it would be opportune for all, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, to re-read the en-

lightening content of n.76 of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, from the Second Vatican Council. In it the Council Fathers recall with great clarity and balance the true and sound relationship that should exist between the Church and the political community. Starting from the presupposition that each is independent and autonomous in its respective field, albeit in the sole service of the same human persons, it affirms at the same time, with crystal clarity, the Church’s right to preach the faith always and everywhere, as well as to teach her social doctrine, and in a special way “to pass moral judgement in those matters which regard public order, when the fundamental rights of a person or the salvation of souls require it.” As can be seen from this passage, the Council Fathers only manifest a specific requirement of the Church’s mission, which does not, properly speaking, demand from the political community the right to present the deposit of faith and to teach the right way to live it, but reminds her of her duty to do this, in order not to betray the mandate entrusted to her by her Founder. In so doing, the Church limits herself to proposing the saving message of evangelical truth, without seeking

absolutely to impose it on anyone – which, today more than ever, would be counterproductive.

However, this does not mean that, in the appropriate forms and at the appropriate times and places of political and social life, those who exercise authority in the Church do not have the duty to affirm the importance of certain choices. In carrying out this specific task, the Magisterium does no more than remind everyone of the intrinsic and irrevocable demands of human nature, demands which obviously, in the light of Revelation and in view of eternal salvation, are binding in a very special way upon those who profess to be Christians.

Human law must safeguard the rights of all

In this context, let us now examine, almost by way of example and application of the above, the issue of the legalization of abortion in many juridical systems today, presented by contemporary “culture” as a conquest of civilization, an “inviolable right” of the modern woman, even if it always objectively remains an abominable crime³ passed off as a right, since it consists of the murder of the innocent by antonomasia – the poorest of the poor, because unborn!

Thus, the attempt to legally legitimize abortion sidesteps the intrinsic juridical contradiction on which abortion rests. In effect, if the idea of the “rule of law” arose and was established over time as the safeguard of the rights of everyone against all anarchy or totalitarianism, how can a law be admitted into the legal system that makes of a fundamental and primary right, the right to life, an arbitrary concession? If any of us came to life be-



The Magisterium fulfils its duty in reaffirming the supreme and inviolable value of life from the moment of conception

cause our mother did us this “favour”, we can no longer speak of an authentic and personal “right”; then the concept and the consequent structure of the modern rule of law crumble catastrophically, since precisely its first and fundamental right has been reduced, at best, to a favour!

Therefore, if the Magisterium, even at the cost of unpopularity and accusations of interference, ceaselessly reaffirms in every forum and on every occasion the supreme and inviolable value of life from the moment of conception, it does so in the awareness of fulfilling a strict duty. A duty which, although arising from and enlightened by faith, cannot be relegated to it. This has a specific meaning for parliamentarians, politicians and leaders of countries who declare themselves Catholic. The defence of life is not a confessional issue, so that it is enough to proclaim oneself a “non-believer” to justify choices and attitudes contrary to reason, truth, law and justice. When we address questions of life and the dignity of the human person, we are dealing with decisions that are not subject to the mere consensus of the majority in order to be morally adopted. This requires of the Magisterium, and in a particular way of baptized persons who exercise positions in public ad-

ministration, the duty to intervene in the political sphere, avoiding that inferiority complex which so often plays a considerable role, with harmful results, in the political engagement of Catholics.

Dialogue is important and necessary, provided it does not impede the search for truth and justice, which can never be sacrificed on the altar of compromise, opportunism or cynical utilitarianism, especially when innocent persons are sacrificed on that altar.

Conclusion

These simple and brief reflections give us hope and, above all, encourage us to pray to the Lord so that the Catholics of our day may become ever more aware of the need to develop a mature faith, which is indispensable for announcing and witnessing to today’s world the beauty and the fascination of our Faith. A Faith that is the fruit of the relationship lived with the One who loved us to the point of giving His life for us on the Cross, and who is never against man, but always entirely in favour of him. ✧

¹ FRANCIS. *Regina Caeli*, 22/5/2022.

² For further insights on the current issue, see: MOLINARI, Elena. *Aborto, la Corte Suprema può revocare il suo “sì”*. *Poi parola agli Stati*. In: www.avvenire.it [available in Italian].

³ Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Gaudium et spes*, n.51; ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Evangelium vitae*, n.4. Considering its current relevance, the entire encyclical of St. John Paul II calls for meditation, but I draw special attention to n. 22 and 23.

Maternal Dedication of Dona Lucilia

With all the attentiveness proper to a truly Catholic mother, Dona Lucilia strove to provide her children with a proper formation, stimulating in them a sense of the marvellous.

✦ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

Dona Lucilia was also very careful with her children's nutrition. She believed in the wise old concept that strong health is based on good nutrition. Therefore, she made every effort to ensure that Rosée and Plinio had substantial and appetizing meals set before them at the table.

Painstaking maternal care with nutrition

With loving care, she discovered what dishes they most enjoyed. Then, with the cooks, she arranged a menu entirely adapted to their tastes. By this means, she intended to stimulate their appetites so that they would eat well.

She often took the children to bakeries and tearooms such as Map-pin's or the German Shop, where refinement went hand in hand with good food, of which they enthusiastically approved. Sometimes *Fräulein* Matilde, their governess, accompanied them as well.

With motherly diligence, Dona Lucilia even turned to some of the old home-style recipes that she had collected while in Pirassununga, her birthplace.

At that time, São Paulo was still a quaint mixture of country life and

urban progress. In the early morning, the jingling bells of a herd of goats could be heard, whose wholesome and tasty milk was being sold door-to-door. Dona Lucilia would send a maid to buy some, and she herself would serve it to the children while they were still in bed, in beautiful crystal glasses and flavoured with French cognac and cinnamon. The recipe was as simple as it was old, and always proved a powerful tonic.

At other times, when the children were busy with their studies under the vigilant eye of *Fräulein* Matilde, Dona Lucilia prepared delicious snacks to reward their efforts.

In addition to the care she took with her children's nourishment, Dona Lucilia also understood the importance of another aspect of a child's upbringing which is often lightly glossed over – their toys.

Stimulating the children's sense of the marvellous

Through toys, Dona Lucilia sought to remind Rosée and Plinio of the fairy-tale world of European civilization they had recently been introduced to. Thus, their childhood was surrounded by the aura of European culture, directing their tendencies upward.



Hence, she categorically avoided any toy that tended toward vulgarity, or that could encourage a secularist mindset. Rather, she favoured those that stimulated their appreciation of the marvellous or contributed to their intellectual and cultural formation.

When planning her Christmas shopping, she would take Rosée and Plinio for an outing, and “by chance”

drop into several of São Paulo's best toy stores, such as The Hare, Fuchs' Gifts, and St. Nicholas, and let them browse the toys to their hearts' content.

Since both of them were quite demonstrative, she easily discovered their preferences by observing their reactions. In this way her surprises were always compatible with the children's wishes.

One of the toys Plinio received from Dona Lucilia, that brightened his early childhood was a small wooden horse – huge to him – that he called “my Enormous.”

When the family went abroad, “Enormous” was left locked in the toy closet. When he got back from Europe, one of the first things he wanted to do was to take out “Enormous” and play with it again. But to his astonishment, when he opened the closet, the horse seemed to have shrunk!

Extremely perplexed, Plinio wondered what unkind person had switched his beloved toy with this diminutive substitute. He finally had to submit to the irrefutable logic of the explanation given: “Enormous” had not gotten smaller, but rather he had grown. Keenly disappointed, he wanted nothing more to do with the toy.

Dona Lucilia smiled with tender compassion at her son's reaction; Plinio was experiencing the first of a long line of disillusionments that life holds for everyone.

Sometimes her dedication impelled her to make homemade gifts for the children. In spite of feeling unwell, she might stay up to one or two in the morning drawing figures such as paper dolls, which she would cut out, decorate and paint for Rosée with meticulous skill. She used to accent their hair and clothes with sparkling mica powder.

She also had a carpenter build a dollhouse for her daughter which she decorated with curtains that she

herself had carefully cut and sewn and miniature furniture of her own design. The house had three “spacious” rooms: a living room, a dining room, and a bedroom.

The lead soldiers she bought Plinio at the Maurice Grumbach Store, strikingly decked out in colourful uniforms, were among his favourite toys. Over time, he amassed a collection of over a thousand figures, with which he organized parades, reviews, and battles, and kept for years afterwards as a fond souvenir of his childhood.

Another loving gift from Dona Lucilia to her son was a miniature French village. She thoughtfully chose this

toy, not only to stir the child's imagination – since the village could be set up however he wished – but also to foster a heightened appreciation for good manners, since among the set's pieces were some village characters portrayed as cordially greeting each other. One of them, for instance, the judge, sporting coattails and cane, was tipping his hat to a passer-by.

Among the gifts he received from Dona Lucilia, Plinio especially liked the imported puzzles, depicting palaces, European landscapes or scenes from the East such as the Taj Mahal or a group of nomadic *Tuaregs* mounted on camels and crossing an immense desert, its sands tinged a reddish-gold by the sunset.

Preparing her children to follow the path of duty

Anyone who considers Dona Lucilia's maternal dedication in a superficial way might inaccurately suppose that her abounding goodness, affection, and sweetness would have cancelled out the opposite virtues of severity, intransigence against evil and a sense of justice.

But when duty called – no matter how difficult it might be – or when there was evil to be rejected, she did not give in one millimetre, while maintaining all the gentleness of her conduct.

For example, she never permitted changes in the daily routine. She insisted on morning and night prayers, on grace before and after meals, and on punctual bedtimes, wake-up, and nap times. Faithful observance of these many daily obligations prepared her children to choose the path of duty, even at life's most difficult moments. ✧

Taken, with minor adaptations, from: *Dona Lucilia*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, p.174-177

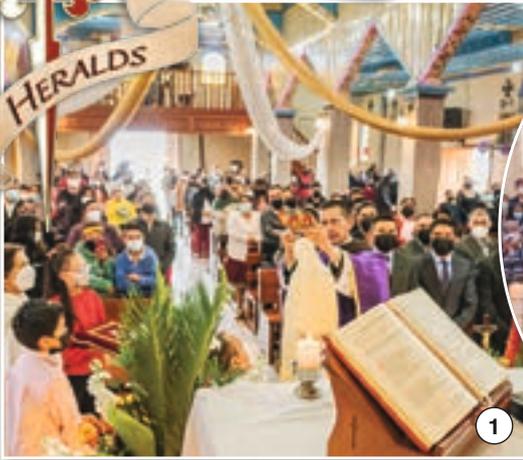


Reproduction

**With both kindness and firmness,
Dona Lucilia prepared
her children to always choose
the path of duty**

Plinio as a child; previous page,
Dona Lucilia in 1906

Photos: Emilio Paez



1



2



3

Ecuador – In March, the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary visited several parishes in the Province of Azuay, gathering the faithful for a solemn crowning of the Blessed Virgin, followed by the Holy Mass. Above, visiting Tutupali Grande (photo 1) and Zhucay (photo 2), in Tarqui, and the main parish of Camilo Ponce Enríquez (photo 3).

araldimissioni.it



1



2

Ricardo Schneider

araldimissioni.it



3



4

araldimissioni.it



5

Franco Bobbio

Italy – On June 13, the Heralds of the Gospel participated in the procession in honour of St. Anthony held at the basilica dedicated to him in Padua (photo 2). In Rome, the commemorations for the feast of St. Rita of Cassia took place on May 21 and 22, in the Church of San Benedetto in Piscinula, with times set aside for prayer and for Eucharistic Celebrations (photo 1). During this period, Marian missions continued to be carried out in several Italian cities, including Anioia (photo 3) and Scoppito (photo 4). The Pilgrim Statue also passed through Our Lady of the Assumption Parish of Borbiago just outside Mira, during the blessing of the fields for a good crop (photo 5).



Photos: Nicol Langa

Mozambique – The celebration of the Vigil of Pentecost in the Parish of St. Gabriel, of the Servite Fathers (photo 2), Corpus Christi procession (photo 1) and Sunday Masses in the St. Joseph Community of Matola-Gare (photo 5), were some of the pastoral activities carried out by the Heralds of this country over the last few months. In May, three hundred children of the St. Vincent Community received the Scapular of Our Lady of Carmel (photo 4), and a new group of the faithful made their consecration as slaves of love to the Blessed Virgin, according to the method of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (photo 3).



Photos: Isabel Sousa

Brazil – Residences close to the Mount Calvary Chapel, belonging to Our Lady of Graces Parish in Mairiporã (SP), received a visit from the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on May 28. The Herald priest who accompanied these visits blessed homes and administered the Anointing of the Sick to those in need of it.

José Maldonado



1



2

Emilio Paez



3



Pablo Vela

4



5

Emilio Paez

Emilio Paez

Visits to Latin-American Schools

The Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was received with joy and devotion at numerous educational centres in Latin America. Above, visits to the La Salle School in Mexico City (photo 1); to the Unidad Educativa American School (photo 2), the Unidad Educativa Latinoamericana

(photo 3) and Ausubel College (photo 5), in Cuenca, Ecuador; and to the St. Clare of Assisi School in Buenos Aires, Argentina (photo 4). In many of these visits, a musical presentation was performed for the students after the crowning of the Blessed Virgin.

Photos: Rocío Hidalgo



Colombia – On April 25, the Carlos Eugenio Restrepo Policing Academy of La Estrella commemorated its 38th anniversary with a Mass presided over by Fr. Juan Antonio Vargas, EP, and concelebrated by military pastor Fr. Zahir Gabriel Arión. The feminine sector of the Heralds of the Gospel in Medellín embellished the celebration with their singing.



Photos: Nuno Moura

Portugal – The Fatima Shrine welcomed approximately eight thousand pilgrims on April 23, gathered to participate in the 17th National Encounter of the Heralds of the Gospel. The programme culminated with a Holy Mass celebrated by Archbishop Francisco Senra Coelho of the Évora diocese, in the Basilica of the Blessed Trinity.



Photos: Felipe Cedraz

Brazil – The Easter Mass for the military in Salvador, presided over by Metropolitan Archbishop Sérgio da Rocha in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, was accompanied by a choral ensemble of the Heralds, who also assisted with the liturgical ceremony (photo 1). On May 13, Councilman Alexandre Aleuia consecrated the city to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in the municipal chamber (photo 3). And, on the following day, sixteen members of the faithful were confirmed by Auxiliary Bishop of Salvador Marco Eugênio Galvão Leite de Almeida, in the house of the Heralds in Lauro de Freitas (photos 4 and 5), where the First Saturday Communion of reparation is held each month (photo 2).



Eucharistic campaign is promoted in the United States

A survey conducted in 2019 by the American agency Pew Research Center, pointed out that only about 31% of Catholics in the United States believe in the Real Presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. In view of this, on June 14 the Archdiocese of Detroit, with the help of Hallow App, launched the *I Am Here* campaign, which aims to promote a true devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist.

Among other resources, the initiative features numerous testimonies from the faithful regarding the change experienced in their lives by Eucharistic Adoration, as well as making an app available on its website with meditations and explanations about the Eucharist, encouraging the faithful to listen to them during a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in their parish.

Beatification of the Lebanese martyrs

On June 4, the Catholic Church in Lebanon had the great joy of celebrating the beatification of two Franciscan priests who died as martyrs during the First World War. Fr. Léonard Melki and Fr. Thomas Saleh were childhood friends and both joined the Order of Friars Minor. Under false accusations, the former was arrested and brutally tortured until he was shot dead on June 11, 1915, in the desert, with 417 other prisoners. Fr. Thomas Saleh, on the other hand, was

condemned to capital punishment on charges of conspiring against the Ottoman Empire, for hiding an Armenian priest persecuted for belonging to that people. He died on January 18, 1917 of malnutrition and typhoid while walking to the place of execution.

adoracionperpetuabarcelona.org



Chapels of Perpetual Adoration increase in Spain

The number of chapels destined for Perpetual Adoration in Spain has continued to grow. Since March 2020, despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences on religious practice, five new Adoration chapels have been opened, bringing the total to seventy throughout the country.

Javier Taberner, one of the driving forces behind the devotion in Spain, highlights that this is a symptom that “people are revaluing the importance of having the Lord close to us twenty-four hours a day.”

Bishops of Colombia hold course on exorcism

From June 21 to 23, the Colombian Bishops' Conference held the Second Course on Exorcism and Liberation Prayer in Bogotá, which brought together bishops and lay delegates from all the dioceses of the country, and was delivered by speakers from several different areas.

As Bishop Gabriel Londoño Sepúlveda, exorcist of the Archdiocese of Bogotá explained, the meeting aimed at responding to the new spiritual circumstances that

are emerging not only in Colombia, but throughout the world, helping ministers in their care for so many people who feel under attack by evil.

From Swiss Guard to seminarian

After eight years in the Swiss Guard, thirty-two-year-old Didier Grandjean decided to leave his post as a non-commissioned officer in the armed corps to enter the seminary. As he himself reported to an Italian news agency, during his time in the Eternal City he gradually felt the call to serve Our Lord more closely and to dedicate his life entirely to Him. Thus, after long reflection, he concluded that priesthood is the path that God wants him to take.

Martyrs for chastity beatified in Poland

On June 11, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, presided at the beatification ceremony of ten Polish nuns who suffered martyrdom at the hands of Soviet troops in 1945. Sister Maria Paschalis Jahn and her companions belonged to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth, and died in different cities defending their faith and chastity after being attacked by Red Army soldiers.

The nuns' elevation to the altars is also a way of honouring all the other consecrated women executed by Soviet soldiers during the war period. It is estimated that in the Congregation of St. Elizabeth alone, more than a hundred sisters were murdered in similar circumstances.

Christians obliged to abandon their homes

A report published in June by *Open Doors*, an NGO working for religious freedom, reveals that Christians in fifty-eight countries – out of the seventy-six where they suffer the

Caritas Spain Celebrates Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

This year Caritas Spain completes seventy-five years of service. The institution came into being in the difficult post-war period both nationally and worldwide, with a view to addressing the great hardships the population was facing at that time. In 1947, the founding statutes were drawn up, constituting Caritas as we know it today. Over time, the organization has expanded to the point of undertaking charitable efforts on an international level. Today it runs more than sixty projects in forty countries of Africa, South and Central America, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

The commemorations for the anniversary culminated on July 1 with the celebration of a Mass of thanksgiving presided over by Cardinal Carlos Osoro Sierra, Archbishop of Madrid, in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Almudena. Caritas Spain thus wished to thank all the agents, volunteers and donors who make its work for the benefit of the most vulnerable people possible.



archimadrid.org

Eucharistic celebration in the Cathedral of Almudena for the seventy-fifth anniversary of Caritas

most persecution worldwide – have been forced to leave their homes because of the Faith they profess.

Social or family pressure, laws against “apostasy and blasphemy”, political instability and the impositions of extremist groups are among the main factors provoking this situation.

According to Helene Fisher, one of the specialists responsible for the research, “Displacement is not just a by-product of persecution, but, in many cases, it is an intentional part

of a broader strategy to drive out Christianity from the community or country.”

Two priests murdered in Nigeria

Two more priests have joined the victims of the religious persecution ravaging Nigeria. On June 26, armed men murdered Fr. Vitus Bologo, chaplain of the Catholic community at the Kaduna State Polytechnic, at the Correctional Centre along Kaduna-Kachia road. On the same day, Fr. Christopher Odia of Auchi

Diocese was kidnapped while on his way to Sunday Mass, and subsequently killed.

A few days earlier, three people died and forty others were kidnapped in an attack on St. Moses Church in northwestern Nigeria that occurred during Sunday Mass. And on June 5, the Solemnity of Pentecost, some forty worshippers lost their lives in the massacre perpetrated by armed terrorists at St. Francis Xavier Church in the south-west of the country.

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What Is Your Worth?

After heaving a few bitter sighs, Andy begins to wander aimlessly around the apartment, waiting for some inspiration to come to him. His anxiety is mounting. This becoming serious...



✦ Sr. Maria Gabriela Fiúza, EP

The sun has already set. We find ourselves in an urban district like any other, in the everyday environment of a family home – a fourth-floor apartment of a tall building.

After hours before his notebook, a thousand incomplete ideas crowd young Andy's mind, but not a single sentence has been written... What is he doing? Andy's Literature teacher has given an assignment worth ten points. The students must write an essay entitled: "What Is Your Worth?" And yet after racking his brain for what seemed an eternity, he still has no inspiration for something fit to be called a "literary composition." Tired and frustrated, he closes his notebook and starts pacing aimlessly about the room. To complete the picture, the dog seems to share the boy's bewildered state, and starts to race around in rapid circles...

Andy slumps on the sofa and pulls out his cell

phone, convinced that this "magic" device will at least provide some idea for his work, and perhaps even a ready-made composition! Faster than his one of his dog's laps, a search re-

sult appears for the word *worth*: "Car ratings based on true worth." Anticipating success, he selects the item! But... just then, his mother's voice tears him abruptly from his research:

"Andy! Your brother had a car accident on his way back from college! He wasn't hurt, though. And luckily the car he was driving wasn't worth much..."

"Oh... good thing!" Andy replies, disconcerted.

In a few seconds, all the "true worth" that the internet offered him seemed to become... worthless.

Perhaps some other source can provide inspiration. He picks up the pamphlet he received at the drugstore when he went to buy his grandmother's medication. He reads the words written in large, flashy print: "Care for your health – nothing is worth so much!" This is it! Andy imagines he has found the idea that will earn him ten points in Literature! He picks up his notebook and, vaguely ashamed of



Illustrations: Giuliana D'Amaro

Hours before his notebook, and not a single sentence written... Andy could not decide how to begin his assignment!

himself, copies the message from the pharmacy literature to form the opening phrase of his painstaking essay.

Another interruption soon breaks his flow of thought: the telephone rings, and Andy jumps up and runs to get it. You would never guess he was the same fellow who appeared so glum a few moments ago. The dog begins to bark and jump, as if wanting to share in its master's imminent triumph. Andy answers. Surprise! But not every surprise is good... The call is to notify him that his cousin Jacob's birthday party has been cancelled due to sickness. Jake himself has taken ill. One more thing supposedly "worth so much" goes down the drain without prior notice... Now quite upset, Andy harshly orders his poor dog to stop barking. Unable to fathom the cause for this sudden change, the dog lies down dejectedly. In a gesture of exasperation, Andy tears that sheet out of his notebook and crumples it into a ball.

Anxiety is mounting. And the matter is serious!

Our student now takes a seat at the desk where his father solves his work problems; he finds a newspaper next to the computer – something he doesn't see very often. The idea of reading a physical, not "virtual", text attracts the young writer. Feeling mature beyond his years, Andy concentrates his best powers of comprehension on those little black letters. "People today are worth the money they hold in savings," is the first idea encountered. This must be answer to the whole challenge! Andy does not waste a moment: he barges through the screen saver to begin typing his masterpiece.

Suddenly... a "window" pops up, perhaps related to his father's work, with a message that reads: "Economic crash threatens to deplete the savings of the population." This can't be true! Almost frantic, he clicks on another item with cheerier colours and is greeted by the headline: "The Pan-



After many failed attempts, he selected a volume from his grandfather's bookshelf for inspiration

dem and financial crisis." Worn out by repeated disappointment, Andy has no energy to even log out of the computer... He pushes the swivel chair back and lets his head fall upon the keyboard.

After a few bitter sighs, he manages to get matters in perspective. "Some idea will come to me if I move around a bit," he thinks. He begins to stroll aimlessly around the apartment again, always accompanied by his faithful pet, who seems to bear no grudge over his recent ill-humoured outburst.

Finally, he wanders over to the bookshelf bequeathed by his grandfather. On it are rows of books, a pile of cooking magazines his mother left there, and even a discreet layer of dust... Where should he turn for inspiration?

With determination Andy selects one of the oldest volumes. Opening it randomly, he sits down and with astonishment, reads the first chapter heading he sees: "Statues of Incalculable Worth". Worth! "Oh, no... Will this be another dead end?" Risking the possible trauma, he decides to peruse the chapter.

Turning the page, the boy views a photo of an ancient statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Worn by the centuries, it even had to face a raging fire! Andy reads an explanatory note: In the centre of a medieval square stood the devout Virgin of the Afflicted, weathering the elements and ever smiling down on passers-by. One day a fire broke out in the city and spread quickly. Flames engulfed and singed the beloved statue. That fire was extinguished and the statue rescued, but another fire had been set alight: the people's love for the Virgin of the Afflicted. She became the local Patroness. The final comment reads: "The material of which the statue is sculpted is by no means precious. Our region boasts countless pieces of superior quality. However, after the ordeal our intercessor endured, She is now worth more than gold."

Enthused, Andy closes the volume as ideas come to mind with ease and clarity! He seizes the notebook rejected hours ago and begins to write with a sure hand: "What is your worth? Your worth can be measured by the struggles, sufferings, and dangers you have faced! The value of a human being does not lie in material goods, health or money... People's worth is hinged upon whether or not they fulfil the will of God, and remain faithful to Him in every circumstance, even when they are singed by the flames of misfortune."

Lines after line flow from the happy student's pen. He had learned much from his many fruitless searches and one worthwhile reading. "That's a lesson done, and a lesson learned for life!" he exclaimed with relief. Seeming to sense its master's satisfaction, the friendly dog leaped to join him on the sofa. Andy, now much wiser for his experiences, stroked the little animal's head and concluded: "Today I understood where my true worth comes from: weathering the storms in union with God!" ✧

THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

1. St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†1787 Paganì - Italy).

Blessed Aleksy Sobaszek, priest and martyr (†1942). Polish priest deported to the concentration camp of Dachau, Germany, where he died after suffering terrible torments.

2. St. Eusebius of Vercelli, bishop (†371 Vercelli - Italy).

St. Peter Julian Eymard, priest (†1868 La Mure - France).

Blessed Joan of Aza (†thirteenth century). Mother of St. Dominic de Guzman, whom she guided along the path of virtue from his childhood.

3. St. Peter of Anagni, bishop (†1105). Benedictine monk elected Bishop of Anagni, Italy.

4. St. Jean-Marie Vianney, priest (†1859 Ars-sur-Formans - France).

St. Aristarchus. Macedonian Christian; disciple of St. Paul. He accompanied him during difficult times in the apostolate, even to prison.

5. Dedication of Basilica of St. Mary Major.

Blessed Frederic Janssoone, priest (†1916). Franciscan missionary friar from France who came to Canada in 1881. He contributed greatly to the growth of the

Third Order of Saint Francis and is well known for his labours for the sanctuary at Capde-la-Madeleine, Quebec, where he worked miracles.

6. Transfiguration of Our Lord.

St. Hormisdas, Pope (†523). He ended the schism caused by Acacius in the East.

7. 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Sixtus II, Pope, and **companions**, martyrs (†258 Rome).

St. Cajetan of Thiene, priest (†1547 Naples - Italy).

Blessed Jordan Forzatei, abbot (†c. 1248). To escape from the fire raging in Padua, he took refuge in a Benedictine monastery. There he remained, drawn by religious life.

8. St. Dominic de Guzman, priest (†1221 Bologna - Italy).

Blessed Maria Margherita Caiani, virgin (†1921). Foundress of the Franciscan Institute of the Minim Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Poggio, Italy.

9. St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, virgin and martyr (†1942 Auschwitz - Poland).

Blessed Florentino Asensio Barroso, bishop and martyr (†1936). He was arrested and shot during the Spanish Civil War, shortly after taking possession of the Diocese of Barbastro.

10. St. Lawrence, deacon and martyr (†258 Rome).

Blessed Augustine Ota, religious and martyr (†1622). Jesuit lay brother and ardent catechist, beheaded in Japan.

11. St. Clare of Assisi, virgin (†1253 Assisi - Italy).

St. Equitius, abbot (†a. 571). Due to his holiness, he filled the monasteries of the ancient province of Valeria in Italy.

12. St. Jane Frances de Chantal, religious (†1641 Moulins - France).

Blessed Victoria Díez y Bustos de Molina, virgin and martyr (†1936). Shot during the Spanish Civil War, she died exhorting other Catholics to martyrdom.

13. Sts. Pontian, Pope, and **Hippolytus**, priest, martyrs (†c. 236 Sardinia - Italy).

St. Radegunde (†587). Wife of Clotaire, King of the Franks, she entered the Monastery of the Holy Cross of Poitiers while her husband was still alive.

14. 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe, priest and martyr (†1941 Auschwitz - Poland).

St. Domingo Ibáñez de Erquicia, priest and martyr (†1633). Dominican missionary killed in Nagasaki, Japan, by order of shogun Tokugawa Yemitsu.

15. Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady.

St. Alipius, bishop (†c. 430). Bishop of Tagaste, Algeria, and disciple of St. Augustine. He was also his companion in conversion, pastoral ministry and the fight against the heretics.

16. St. Stephen of Hungary, king (†1038 Székesfehérvár - Hungary).



Francisco Lecaros

St. Radegunde - In the church dedicated to her in Poitiers (France)

St. Roch, pilgrim (†c. 1379). Born in France, he went on pilgrimage throughout Italy, caring for those stricken by the plague.

17. St. Joan Delanoué, virgin (†1736). She founded the Institute of the Sisters of St. Ann of Providence in Saumur, France.

18. Holy Martyrs of the Massa Candida (†third-fourth century). Christians killed in a pit of burning lime in Utica, in present-day Tunisia, during the persecutions of Valerian and Gallienus. They are so called because their remains were rendered a pure white mass.

19. St. John Eudes, priest (†1680 Caen - France).

St. Bartholomew of Simeri, abbot (†1130). After some time as a hermit, he built a monastery in Calabria, Italy.

20. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, abbot and Doctor of the Church (†1153 Langres - France).

St. Samuel, prophet. Called by the Lord from an early age, he was a judge in Israel. By divine mandate he anointed Saul as king and, when God rejected him, he conferred the royal anointing on David.

21. 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Pius X, Pope (†1914 Rome).

Blessed Victoire Rasoamanarivo, widow (†1894). Belonging to an influential family in Madagascar, she converted to the Catholic Faith. When the missionaries were expelled from the country, she helped the Christians and defended the Church.

22. Queenship of Our Lady.

Blessed Élie Leymarie de La Roche, priest and martyr (†1794).

Imprisoned in a sordid ship at Rochefort, France, for not having signed the civil constitution of the clergy, he died consumed by the diseases contracted there.

23. St. Rose of Lima, virgin (†1617 Lima).

St. Zacheus, bishop (†second century). According to tradition, he was the fourth bishop to direct the Church of Jerusalem after the Apostle St. James.

24. St. Bartholomew, Apostle.

St. Emily de Vialar, virgin (†1856). She founded, in Gaillace, France, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition, to spread the Gospel in distant lands.

25. St. Louis IX, king of France (†1270 Tunis - Tunisia).

St. Joseph Calasanz, priest (†1648 Rome).

Blessed Maria del Tránsito de Jesus Sacramentado, virgin (†1885). She founded the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Cordoba, Argentina.

26. St. Melchizedek. King of Salem and priest of the Most High God (cf. Gn 14:18-20). His priesthood prefigured that of Christ (cf. Heb 5:6).



St. Jean-Marie Vianney - Cathedral of Bayonne (France)

27. St. Monica (†387 Ostia - Italy).

Blessed Angelo Conti, priest (†1312). A priest of the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine, who died in Foligno, Italy; he was noted for his patience in the face of offences.

28. 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

St. Augustine, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†430 Hippo - Algeria).

St. Florentina, virgin (†seventh century). Sister of three Saints: Leander, Fulgentius and Isidore of Seville. She was abbess of the Benedictine monastery of Écija, Spain.

29. Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist.

St. Euphrasia of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, virgin (†1952). A religious of the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel of the Syro-Malabar rite, who died in the convent of Ollur, Kerala State, India.

of the Mother of Carmel of the Syro-Malabar rite, who died in the convent of Ollur, Kerala State, India.

30. St. Fiacre, hermit (†c. 670).

Native of Ireland, he settled in France in a solitary place. There he built the monastery that gave rise to the town of Saint-Fiacre.

31. St. Raymond Nonato, religious (†c. 1240). One of St. Peter Nolasco's first companions in the Order of Mercedarians; he died on his way to Rome where he was to receive the cardinal's biretta.

Nobly Sacral

An archetypal library should not only aim to be functional, but to comfort the soul that yearns to ascend to the lofty heights of wisdom. Its beauty should be of a calibre to attract the heavenly spirits.



↳ Lorena Mello

It is a noble room, but it does not belong to a palace; it is distinctly sacral, and yet not a chapel. In this atmosphere one feels joy, without hearing laughter; there is light without exaggeration, a beauty that does not turn the spirit from the most elevated thoughts.

Comfortable armchairs encourage a conversation that never begins, for a profound silence reigns there. A great number of people discreetly visit it, without detracting from the atmosphere of recollection.

What place are we talking about? With the photos that illustrate these pages, the suspense is lifted and it is not difficult to guess... Does the reader agree with the above description?

And if we pause for a moment to reflect on our impressions, we may conclude that there could be no more fitting setting for an excellent library – a repository for thousands of books brimming with lessons in history, culture and knowledge.

If it is always desirable to have a suitable space to carry out any activity, with all the more reason is it appropriate to have a specific place to feed our knowledge!

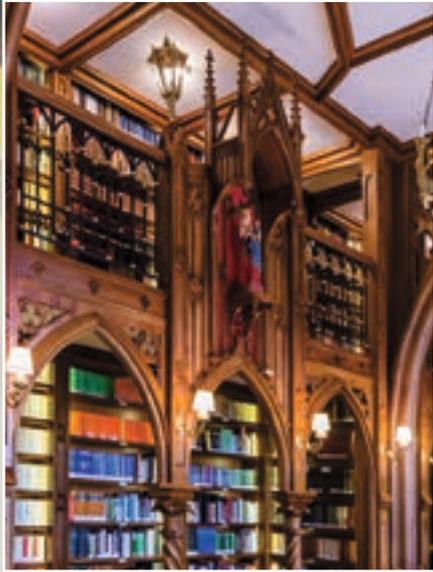
The functionalist vision of today's society considers libraries as buildings or rooms where collections of books, periodicals and other documents are deposited and conveniently catalogued. The aim is not only to keep the valuable collection organized, but also protected from humidity, fire, moths, and theft, among other perils. These are all important objectives, but should they be the only ones?

Modern libraries usually carry out their practical mission well; however, they neglect a far superior aspect. A library should be a place where our mind can put into play the intellectual capacities that God gave us when He created us and, above all, a place where heavenly spirits dwell, attracted by the nobility of the ambience.

Between Angels and men there are enormous differences, both as regards nature and capacity to act on the supernatural plane, but we share one point in common: reason. Obviously the angelic intelligence far surpasses that of mortals. But this affinity existing between such diverse creatures was for some reason desired by the Most High.

Therefore, an archetypal library should aim not only to be functional, but to comfort the soul that yearns to ascend to the lofty heights of wisdom. Its beauty should be of a calibre to attract our “brother” Angels.

What a benefit! Besides enriching our culture, by spending time in such a place we will strengthen our ties with the heavenly legions. And the simple or complex studies that we carry out in it will easily become much more sublime and supernatural. Indeed, the essence of prayer consists not in reciting long invocations, but in elevating the mind to God. ✧



Photos: Daniel Letelier



João Paulo Rodrigues

Views of the library of Lumen Prophetæ House, Mairiporã (Brazil)



Charly Bernasconi

Queen of the Divine Will

Due to a singular predilection, Our Lady participates in divine royalty in a “sui generis” way. God, as it were, gave Himself entirely to Her and entrusted to Her the sceptre of His power, so that She would govern creation, history and – oh, unfathomable mystery! – himself. In this regard, it can be said that, by a sublime mystery, Mary is Queen even of the divine will, enjoying an

omnipotent audience before the throne of the Most High. Everything is under her feet, and the Persons of the Trinity are pleased to be ruled their Daughter, Mother and Spouse.

The Creator submitted himself to the Virgin in such a way that, so to speak, without Her He can do nothing.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP