



# HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Vol. 17, No. 188  
June 2023

***Burning Furnace  
of Charity***

# *It is so easy to trust completely in My Heart*

**I** am Love! My Heart can no longer contain its devouring flames. I love souls so dearly that I have sacrificed my life for them. It is this love that keeps Me a prisoner in the tabernacle. [...]

For love of souls, I instituted the Sacrament of Penance, that I might forgive them, not once or twice, but as often as they need to recover grace. There I wait for them, longing to wash away their sins, not in water, but in my Blood.

How often in the course of the ages have I, in one way or another, made known My love for men: I have shown them how ardently I desire their salvation. I have revealed My Heart to them. This devotion has been as light cast over the whole earth, and today is a powerful means of gaining souls, and so of extending my Kingdom.

Now, I want something more, for if I long for love in response to My own, this is not the only return I desire from souls: I want them all to have confidence in My mercy, to expect

all from My clemency, and never to doubt My readiness to forgive. I am God, but a God of love! I am a Father, but a Father full of compassion and never harsh. [...]

This is what I wish all to know.

I will teach sinners that the mercy of My Heart is inexhaustible. Let the callous and indifferent know that My Heart is a fire which will enkindle them, because I love them. To devout and saintly souls I would be the Way, that making great strides in perfection, they may safely reach the harbour of eternal beatitude.

Lastly, of consecrated souls, priests and religious, My elect and chosen ones, I ask, once more, all their love and that they should not doubt Mine, but above all that they should trust Me and never doubt My mercy. It is so easy to trust completely in My Heart!



Photograph of Sister Josefa Menendez -  
Convent of Poitiers (France)

VENERABLE JOSEFA MENENDEZ.  
"The Way of Divine Love". Westminster  
(MD): Newman Press, 1950, p.376-377

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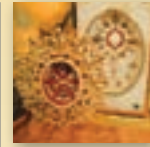
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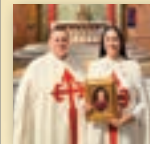
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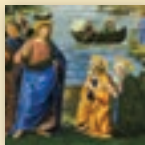
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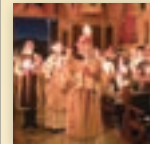
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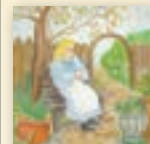
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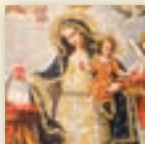
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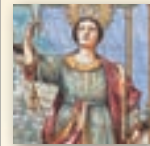
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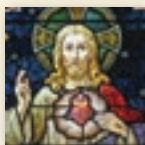
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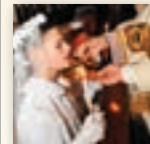
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# OUR READERS WRITE



## **HAPPINESS IS NOT FOUND IN SIN**

Looking at the eyes of St. Gemma on the back cover of the April issue, who would dare to affirm that happiness is found in sin? How different are the empty gazes we encounter on the streets.

I congratulate the Heralds for the work they do with the formation of youth, and with the readers of *Heralds of the Gospel* magazine, for our edification. May the Blessed Virgin repay you a hundredfold!

Vasco Magalhães  
Via [revista.arautos.org](http://revista.arautos.org)

## **ARDENT FAITH AT THE SIDE OF PLINIO CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA**

Who, in approaching Professor Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, is not left with the fire of their faith ablaze?

Happy Huysmans who, seeing that monstrous hatred for the Eucharist, converted and found the sublime in the Trappe, as we read in the article *Converted by the Beauty of the Church*, by Prof. Plinio. Much happier are we, in the hideousness of today, so much worse than that of the 19th century, to find in the Heralds of the Gospel a most faithful echo of the Divine Master, at times saying to us: "Come to Me all you who labour and are weary...", and at other times: "Blessed are those who thirst and hunger for justice...".

Mauro Francesco  
Via [revista.arautos.org](http://revista.arautos.org)

## **MODEL OF CORRESPONDENCE TO THE CATHOLIC VOCATION**

In the article *We Are All Called to Heroism*, in the March edition, we are able to grasp how great is the vocation of a Catholic! And how limited is our strength and our outlook! However,

having models like Dr. Plinio, we feel called to correspond without fear and with total generosity, come what may.

Those who ask receive, says our Divine Master. And if we are to be heroes, we shall not lack the promised grace. But what change must take place in us who are born and live in a world where those held up as heroes are the antithesis of Catholic heroes? Here is what Dr. Plinio proposes: an assiduous interior analysis – without complacency or excuses – and a change of life and resolution! What a challenge! How difficult! But what beauty there is in a hero who expects everything from the grace given through Mary Most Holy, Queen of heroes!

Silvia María Manzanares Jugo  
Via [revistacatolica.org](http://revistacatolica.org)

## **DONA LUCILIA'S INTERCESSION**

I wish to thank you for your charitable work. Reading the magazine *Heralds of the Gospel*, I learned how Dona Lucilla intercedes for the people in need, who turn to her through prayer.

I ask you kindly to inform me if there are specific prayers to ask for her intercession. I too would like to obtain some benefit for my health.

Thank you for your consideration.

Antonella Buono  
Paciano – Italy

## **ETERNAL GRATITUDE!**

With immense joy I express our eternal gratitude for the great gift we continually receive through the magazine *Heralds of the Gospel*, concerning the things of Heaven, the Saints, the virtues and the gifts with which the Lord God fills us, so that, growing in holiness, we may one day be worthy of eternal fellowship and glory in Heaven.

One of the subjects I most appreciate in the magazine is the Eucharist,

food ardently desired by souls thirsting for the presence of God, and offered daily at Mass. Eternal gratitude!

Leila Adriana Domingos Vieira  
Joinville – Brazil

## **SPARK OF STRENGTH, HOPE AND PEACE**

We are all sinners, and so we need mercy and forgiveness. When one of your priests prays for us, it is as if a spark of strength, hope and peace reaches us.

I thank you for this and send my congratulations for your magazine, which is always interesting and instructive.

Rosa de Gori  
Gioia Tauro – Italy

## **"MAY YOU REMAIN STEADFAST AND WRITE MORE!"**

To Brother Alison Batista de Oliveira, author of the article *Blessed Clemens August von Galen – The Lion of Münster*, I pray that you remain steadfast and write more! The text is excellent.

Cry out, Catholic, for if you do not, the stones will cry out to Heaven. St. Anthony had to speak to the fish... since no one deigned to listen to him.

Luciano Jorge de Andrade Junior  
Cascavel – Brazil

## **PAGES THAT HELP US TO BE MORE SPIRITUAL**

I commend you on this truly beautiful "work of art", the magazine *Heralds of the Gospel*, which has the fragrance of love. I learn and become more spiritual with the Christian teachings contained in its pages.

I pray to Jesus, Mary and Joseph that we will have this good publication for many years to come. We need it!

Pedro Alexandre Ricciardi  
Ferreira  
São Paulo – Brazil

## REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION OF THE HEART

The heart, already in antiquity, was considered a symbol of the very core of the human personality. Among the Greeks, for example, it circumscribed reason or the emotions, and among the Romans there was the association of the heart with love, as well as courage, since soldiers were decorated with bronze hearts for acts of bravery.

Distorting the metaphorical value of the heart, paganism also used it for ritual human sacrifices, common in all parts of the world except Israel. To illustrate this, it is enough to cite the case of the Aztecs, whose holocaust consisted in extracting the heart of the victims, while still alive, to offer it to the deities.

Genesis, in turn, mentions that the heart of the Lord was grieved by sin, repenting “that He had made man on the earth” (6:6). Then, faced with his faults, the psalmist pleads for “a clean heart” (Ps 50:10) and for divine “mercy” (Ps 85:3), whose etymology – looking back to the Latin *misericordia* – evokes a heart that is compassionate towards the wretched. The promise of salvation, however, always remained on the horizon for the chosen people, according to the prophecy of Ezekiel: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (36:26).

Jesus Christ, “meek, and humble of heart” (Mt 11:29), invited His disciples to be “pure in heart” (Mt 5:8) and reproached those who had “hearts hardened” (Mk 8:17). From His divine side was born the Church, whose heartbeat has reached the whole world.

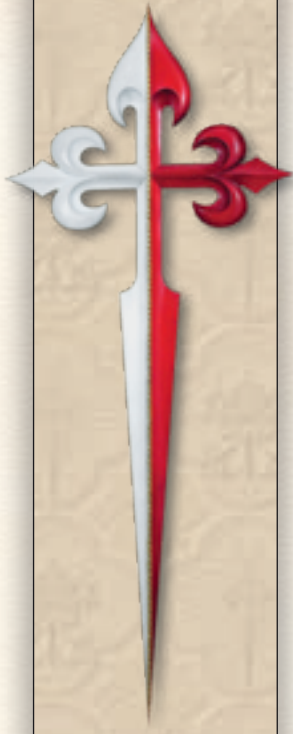
The first millennium of the Christian era did not know devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Its more definite origins go back to the devotion to the Holy Wounds among religious, such as St. Bernard and St. Francis.

Later, Protestants imagined devotion to the Heart of Jesus to be idolatrous and superstitious. In reaction, in 1566 Pope St. Pius V exhorted the bishops of his first consistory: “We will not be able to halt the progress of heresy except by an action upon the heart of God. It is up to us, light of the world, salt of the earth, to enlighten minds and encourage hearts by the example of our holiness and virtues.” The saintly Pontiff understood that the solution to the evils of the time was to be found in touching God’s heart through holiness, beginning with the highest level of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

In 1673, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque received revelations from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to which King Louis XIV was to consecrate France. Following upon the royal indifference, the nation later fell into the aberrations of the French Revolution and into a contumacious de-Christianization. Suffice it to recall that after the murder of the pro-Jacobin Marat in 1793, his heart was touted as a symbol of blasphemous devotion, with a “litany” created to the “sacred” heart of the revolution’s new “martyr”.

In 1917, Our Lady promised the triumph of her Immaculate Heart, which, according to the theology of St. John Eudes, is intrinsically united to that of Jesus. She also prophesied that Russia would spread its errors throughout the world. After Lenin’s death in 1924, the tyrant’s heart was infamously venerated in the mausoleum of Moscow’s Red Square.

In the face of so many revolutions and counter-revolutions concerning the heart, it is imperative that we yearn for a restoration of its highest meaning, by devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in union with the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which is about to be accomplished. ✧



Statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - Church of Our Lady of Carmel, Caieiras (Brazil)

Photo: Timothy Ring



# The Heart of Christ Crucified

“I would like all their sorrows to fall upon me, in order to relieve my neighbour.” This is the degree of compassion to which love leads, when it takes the love of God as its measure. It is this love which must inspire humanity today.

“**C**onfitemini Domino quoniam bonus, quoniam in saeculum misericordia eius”; “Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His steadfast love endures for ever” (Ps 118: 1).

So the Church sings on the Octave of Easter, as if receiving from Christ’s lips these words of the Psalm; from the lips of the risen Christ, who bears the great message of divine mercy and entrusts its ministry to the Apostles in the Upper Room: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you [...]. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn 20: 21-23).

Before speaking these words, Jesus shows His hands and His side. He points, that is, to the wounds of the Passion, especially the wound in His Heart, the source from which flows the great wave of mercy poured out on humanity. From that heart Sr. Faustina Kowalska, the blessed whom from now on we will call a Saint, will see two rays of light shining from that heart and illuminating the world: “The two rays,” Jesus himself explained to her one day, “represent blood and water.”

Blood and water! We immediately think of the testimony given by the Evangelist John, who, when a soldier



Christ crucified - Private collection

on Calvary pierced Christ’s side with his spear, sees blood and water flowing from it (cf. Jn 19: 34). Moreover, if the blood recalls the sacrifice of the Cross and the gift of the Eucharist, the water, in Johannine symbolism, represents not only Baptism but also the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 3: 5; 4: 14; 7: 37-39).

### Love and Mercy personified

Divine Mercy reaches human beings through the heart of Christ crucified: “My daughter, say that I am love and mercy personified,” Jesus will ask Sr. Faustina. Christ pours out this mercy on humanity through the sending of the Spirit who, in the Trinity, is the Person-Love. And is not mercy love’s “second name”, understood in its deepest and most tender aspect, in its ability to take upon itself the burden of any need and, especially, in its immense capacity for forgiveness? [...]

Jesus told Sr. Faustina: “Humanity will not find peace until it turns trustfully to divine mercy.” [...]

What will the years ahead bring us? What will man’s future on earth be like? We are not given to know. However, it is certain that in addition to

*To the Apostles,  
Our Lord points to  
the wounds of the  
Passion, especially  
that in His Heart, the  
source of mercy poured  
out on humanity*

new progress there will unfortunately be no lack of painful experiences. But the light of divine mercy, which the Lord in a way wished to return to the world through Sr. Faustina's charism, will illumine the way for the men and women of the third millennium. [...]

### **Two inseparable loves**

Christ has taught us that "man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but is also called 'to practise mercy' towards others: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' (Mt 5: 7)."

He also showed us the many paths of mercy, which not only forgives sins but reaches out to all human needs. Jesus bent over every kind of human poverty, material and spiritual.

His message of mercy continues to reach us through His hands held out to suffering man. This is how Sr. Faustina saw Him and proclaimed Him to people on all the continents when, hidden in her convent at Lagiewniki in Krakow, she made her life a hymn to mercy: *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo* (Ps 89: 2).

Sr. Faustina's canonization has a particular eloquence: by this act I intend today to pass this message on to the new millennium. I pass it on to all people, so that they will learn to know ever better the true face of God and the true face of their brethren.

In fact, love of God and love of one's brothers and sisters are inseparable, as the First Letter of John has reminded us: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments" (5: 2). Here the Apostle reminds us of the truth of love, showing us its measure and criterion in the observance of the commandments.

It is not easy to love with a deep love, which lies in the authentic gift



St. Faustina Kowalska -  
Corpus Christi Church, Krakow

*How many souls  
have been consoled  
by the prayer "Jesus,  
I trust in You,"  
which Providence  
intimated through  
St. Faustina!*

of self. This love can only be learned by penetrating the mystery of God's love. Looking at Him, being one with His fatherly heart, we are able to look with new eyes at our brothers and sisters, with an attitude of unselfishness and solidarity, of generosity and forgiveness. All this is mercy! [...]

### **Act of abandonment that dispels the thickest clouds**

Sr. Faustina Kowalska wrote in her *Diary*: "I feel tremendous pain when

I see the sufferings of my neighbours. All my neighbours' sufferings reverberate in my own heart; I carry their anguish in my heart in such a way that it even physically destroys me.

I would like all their sorrows to fall upon me, in order to relieve my neighbour."

This is the degree of compassion to which love leads, when it takes the love of God as its measure. It is this love which must inspire humanity today, if it is to face the crisis of the meaning of life, the challenges of the most diverse needs and, especially, the duty to defend the dignity of every human person.

Thus the message of divine mercy is also implicitly a message about the value of every human being. Each person is precious in God's eyes; Christ gave His life for each one; to everyone the Father gives His Spirit and offers intimacy.

This consoling message is addressed above all to those who, afflicted by a particularly harsh trial or crushed by the weight of the sins they committed, have lost all confidence in life and are tempted to give in to despair. To them the gentle face of Christ is offered; those rays from His Heart touch them and shine upon them, warm them, show them the way and fill them with hope.

How many souls have been consoled by the prayer "Jesus, I trust in You," which Providence intimated through Sr. Faustina! This simple act of abandonment to Jesus dispels the thickest clouds and lets a ray of light penetrate every life. ✧

Excerpts from:  
ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*Homily in the Mass for  
the Canonization  
of Blessed Maria Faustina  
Kowalska, 30/4/2000*

"The Calling of the Apostles", by Domenico Ghirlandaio - Sistine Chapel, Vatican



## ✠ GOSPEL ✠

<sup>36</sup> At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, <sup>37</sup> "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; <sup>38</sup> so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

<sup>10:1</sup> Then He summoned His Twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean

spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness.

<sup>2</sup> The names of the Twelve Apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon from Cana, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him.

<sup>5</sup> Jesus sent out these Twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. <sup>6</sup> Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' <sup>8</sup> Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give" (Mt 9:36–10:8).



# Jesus' Heart Was Moved with Pity...

Over the course of history, many have sacrificed their lives for God, or perhaps for a loved one. But who would lay down their life for an enemy? Jesus did precisely this to save each one of us!

✦ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP



## I – GOD LOVED US FIRST!

No one escapes this reality of daily life: the more we shape our environment according to our taste, the greater is our appreciation of it.

We purchase a house, for example, because it suits our needs, and we would only buy one that we liked. But it is particularly after doing our utmost to beautify it according to our preferences that we begin to give it special value. A home means even more to us if we have lived there for a long time; if we have seen our family grow within its walls, it holds a lifetime of memories.

Something similar occurs in God's relationship with humanity, as St. Paul points out in the second reading (Rom 5:6-11) of this Sunday's Liturgy.

*God loved us even when we were at enmity with Him*

In this passage from the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle seeks to stimulate confidence in divine goodness with irrefutable reasoning:

"Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. [...] Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by His life" (5:7-8, 10).

Having inherited the legacy of original sin and its consequences, we are, before Baptism, mere creatures of God, in a state of enmity with Him. And this

situation is aggravated by actual sin, which amounts to a voluntary turning one's back on the Creator and a disordered attachment to creatures.

Despite this, "He loved us first" (1 Jn 4:19), and He took it upon Himself to send His Son to redeem humanity. We are cleansed from original sin and reconciled to Him through the waters of Baptism, which raises us to the condition of children of God – participants in His nature, brothers of Jesus Christ and co-heirs of Heaven, by the merits of His Incarnation, Passion and Death.

St. John Chrysostom comments: "Truly, for us who lived in such great wickedness to be saved, was a very great mark of our being exceedingly loved by Him who saved us. For it was not by Angels or Archangels, but by His Only-begotten Son Himself, that He saved us."<sup>1</sup>

Since God loved us in spite of our wickedness, He will love us all the more after we are pardoned and have entirely recovered His friendship, just as a homeowner is fond of the house that has been arranged and decorated according to his taste.

We will see how much more convincing this marvellous principle is when illustrated by the teaching of Our Lord contained in this Gospel.

## II – THE NEED FOR SHEPHERDS

<sup>36a</sup> At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd.

*If God already loved us in spite of our wickedness, He will love us all the more after we are pardoned and have recovered His friendship*



*The Good Shepherd saw the tremendous spiritual need of the multitudes that followed Him, weary of wandering aimlessly for lack of a guide*

A simple leafing through the Gospel is all it takes to notice the extent to which sheep tending is used to symbolize the relationship between God and humanity. In Gospel times, society was largely linked to the land.

Throughout His preaching, Jesus made countless didactical references to shepherding, even presenting Himself as the Good Shepherd, in order to reach His listeners.

In the verse cited, He touches on the plight of sheep without a shepherd. And in fact, without a shepherd, sheep soon wander from their normal course and meet with trouble. But a shepherd guides the flock to verdant pastures where they can peacefully graze under his vigilant eye.

This image reflects a much more painful reality concerning the salvation of souls. Without a competent spiritual guide capable of discerning the needs of the souls confided to him, and of adapting instruction and progress to the individual's spiritual situation, people lose their way, and, drawn by bad tendencies, stray from the right path into that of sin as they go in search of the illusory happiness of earthly goods.

This lack of guidance produces weariness and discouragement. Often, an understanding look and a word of encouragement from a fervent shepherd would be enough to bring them back to the practice of virtue.

In fact, in the salvation of souls, the counsel of someone with experience is a valuable aid. It is a classic principle of the interior life that the devil's greatest fear in tempting a person is that he will seek the guidance of a superior or a confessor. When this happens, the diabolical wiles are unmasked and rendered harmless, for evil

gains ground only to the extent that it manages to disguise its ultimate intentions.

With His divine knowledge, and from all eternity, Jesus saw the impoverished state of the multitudes that followed Him. But when He finally witnessed that dire situation of spiritual penury, as Man, He "was moved with pity for them," that is, He had *compassion*, He *suffered with them*; He made their suffering His own.

Lamentably, the notion of compassion has become distorted today, being almost exclusively applied to material needs. These, of course, must be met, to facilitate the person's openness to the action of grace.

It was Christian civilization that introduced works of charity in human society. Hospitals and many institutions in benefit of the poor and homeless emerged from the maternal concern of the Church.

But without neglecting the material dimension, it is even more important to provide doctrinal formation and spiritual consolation, for the soul is, by nature, more noble, elevated, and important than the body. Nothing equals the joy that stems from a balanced and tranquil conscience. When this is not clean and transparent, a person does not feel happy, even though possessing all earthly goods.

It is precisely this supernatural happiness, sought in vain by the crowds, that Jesus desires to offer them. They were troubled and abandoned because they lacked someone to give them proper orientation concerning the coming of the Messiah, which Scripture indicated was imminent.

To complicate matters, there were false guides who, "being shepherds, acted the part of wolves.



Jesus preaches to the crowds, by Jan Brueghel, the Elder - National Gallery, Parma (Italy)

Francisco Lecaros

For far from amending the multitude, they even hindered their progress.”<sup>22</sup>

Such an orphanhood is not restricted to those times. If the Word became incarnate today, undoubtedly His attitude would be the same, or perhaps His compassion would be even greater, considering the world’s state of confusion and error. Deprived of a sufficient number of genuine pastors, the public at large has become deaf to God’s voice, mute to speak the truth to others, and ultimately unaware of the salvation that the Church offers.

Thus, just as Jesus took it upon Himself to go into villages during His earthly life, curing everyone along the way and rejecting no one, today He also goes in search of the forsaken multitude and is always ready to receive the sinner. It is enough for the latter to have sincere repentance and the desire to amend his life.

The time has come for us to have pity on the flock, and to remember the obligation of all the baptized to evangelize their neighbour.

### *He is Almighty, but desires our cooperation*

<sup>36b</sup> Then He said to His disciples, <sup>37</sup> “The harvest is abundant but the labourers are few; <sup>38</sup> so ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest.”

It is important to emphasize that, as God, Jesus Christ could have directly accomplished that which He urges the Apostles to request of the “Master of the harvest.” For this, a simple act of His will would have sufficed – “I desire that all be led along the path of holiness!” – thus dispensing with our prayers.

But, no! By a mysterious design, He placed the possibility of collaborating in the work of the salvation of souls within our reach. How? By praying!

Moreover, He is capable of providing for the demands of the harvest, and of granting everyone the opportunity of converting by means of an efficacious grace – such as the one St. Paul received on his way to Damascus – thus doing away with

the role of labourers for the harvest. Nevertheless, He decided that the Gospel message would be transmitted by human instruments, by the action of His disciples.

If we look deeply into the question, we see that man was created with the instinct of sociability in order to facilitate the apostolate. We have the desire and the need to relate with others; people depend on others for their own happiness.

Accordingly, interaction, good example, and good counsel play an important role in the sanctification, progress, and perseverance of all those on the way to eternal happiness.

This calls for an examination of conscience! In our relationships, are we concerned

with our neighbour, and dedicated to his spiritual progress? Are we fervent in prayer? In light of the desire that the Saviour expresses in this verse, it behoves us to raise our voices, beseeching the “Master of the harvest,” the Master of public opinion and of the whole earth, for many shepherds so that the holy people of the New Testament may increase.

### *Evil vanquished by fragile instruments*

<sup>10:1</sup> Then He summoned His Twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness.

We should take into account that evil, in those times, was manifested especially by visible diabolical possession, with sensational signs, while today, perhaps the devil possesses a greater number of people, but in a surreptitious and veiled manner.

Our Lord’s calling the Twelve to give them authority over unclean spirits and the power to cure diseases means that He conferred on them the gift of restraining evil and spreading goodness. Thus, Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, even before being crucified, demolished the dominion of darkness and vanquished the devil.

To humiliate the latter, instead of operating directly, he acted through human creatures, of themselves powerless to fight against satan.



“The Preaching of St. Peter”, by Masolino da Panicale - Church of Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence (Italy)

*Even in our days, for lack of authentic shepherds, public opinion does not comprehend the salvation offered by the Church*

*Jesus granted to the Apostles the power to work many miracles, as proof of the greatness of the Kingdom they were announcing*

### *A record of the Church's beginnings*

<sup>2</sup>The names of the Twelve Apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup>Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; <sup>4</sup>Simon from Cana, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him.

St. Matthew's care in registering the names of the Twelve Apostles in his Gospel responded to the need for making these foundations of the Church known to future centuries at a time of rapid expansion of the Faith, in which the transmission of doctrine to a wide variety of peoples was carried out almost exclusively orally, which could have given rise to future doubts or imprecisions.

Out of humility, St. Matthew includes his name after that of St. Thomas, unlike the other Evangelists (cf. Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15), including reference to his former occupation of "tax collector," to make reparation for his past life. And he mentions Simon Peter first to highlight his role as head of the nascent Church, representative of Our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, bearer of infallibility – he who, to guide the Mystical Body of Christ with complete fidelity, must count on the powers of Heaven!

### *Precautions for an inexperienced apostle*

<sup>5</sup>Jesus sent out these Twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. <sup>6</sup>Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The Apostles were still not fully formed when they were sent on their first mission, and could easily have fallen prey to the bad influence of dangerous circles such as those of the Gentiles or the Samaritans, who were generally focused on the enjoyment of earthly pleasures.

Only after the Resurrection would Jesus tell them: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19); and only with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, would they be ready to undertake the mission of preaching to the pagans.

This is a lesson for us, for if the Saviour applied such prudence in preserving the Apostles, we must also take care, in interacting with those whom we evangelize, not to let ourselves be drawn by that which is contrary to Our Lord.

Caution should be taken while we lack adequate formation; after having been instructed

and fortified, we can set out for the bold and always vigilant conquest.

On the other hand, it was necessary for the disciples to carry out apostolate with the "lost sheep" of the Chosen People, both due to the fact that salvation had been preferentially offered them, as well as to correct the erroneous nationalist conception that led them to judge every Jew as good and every foreigner as bad, as a rabbinic document attests: "Even the best of the *goyim* should be killed."<sup>3</sup> It was necessary for them to personally feel the rejection of the Messiah's message as they came up against the snares of the Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and even many of the people, to gain first-hand experience of their malice.

This salutary clash would heighten their awareness of the change of mentality that they had undergone in their intimate relationship with the Divine Teacher.

### *Attesting to the veracity of the Gospel with works*

<sup>7</sup>"As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' <sup>8</sup>Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give."

The main mission entrusted to the Apostles was that of transmitting the Good News: the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

It was normal for a man of God to prove the veracity of his words by extraordinary phenomena. And it was stated in the Sacred Books that when the Messiah came, the lame would walk, the blind see, the mute speak and the deaf would hear (cf. Is 35:5-6).

Thus, in order to provide convincing testimony that He was truly the Messiah, Jesus orders the Apostles to perform many miracles.

"Lest peasants untaught and illiterate, without the graces of speech, should obtain credit with none when they announced the Kingdom of Heaven, He gives them power [...], that the greatness of the miracles might prove the greatness of their promises."<sup>4</sup>

But, as they received this gift "without cost," they were to likewise act in benefit of their neighbour, fulfilling a role similar to that of Our Lord among them. In other words, He charges them to benefit others unconditionally.

### III – THE KINGDOM PROCLAIMED IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In considering the powers that Jesus bestowed on the Twelve, as well as to countless righteous men at the outset of the expansion of Christianity, it is fitting to question why such marvels are not as frequent today. St. Gregory, at the end of the sixth century, supplies the answer:

“These signs were necessary in the beginning of the Church; the faith of the believers needed to be fed with miracles, that it might grow [...]. The Holy Church daily does spiritually what it then did materially by the Apostles.”<sup>5</sup>

This important teaching of the holy Doctor should be borne in mind. Through the Sacraments, the Church accomplishes even greater wonders in benefit of the crowds who suffer spiritual infirmities: it cleanses the leprous soul of the filth of sin, resurrects the dead to the life of grace, liberates those under the dominion of the devil, and restores the light of faith to the blinded soul.

#### *A mission to endure across the centuries*

The Gospel for the Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time has special beauty; it is an invitation for each one of us. The mission conferred on the Apostles of preaching the imminent coming of

the Kingdom of Heaven will only come to a close at the end of time, when history is concluded.

It is the mission of the Holy Church, of its consecrated ministers, and all the baptized as well; it is the redemptive action of Our Lord Jesus Christ which endures throughout the centuries. It is our obligation to evangelize by word, by example, by prayer or by suffering, with the goal of transforming society.

We must proclaim the necessity of turning away from sin, of undergoing a change of mentality and of continually seeking holiness, and we must strive to see this come about as soon as possible and on the greatest scale possible. For God, we should desire not only the best, but everything, now and forever!

Let us remember that the Kingdom of God begins here on earth, for we are in possession of a seed that will blossom into glory in eternity, when we will participate in God’s own happiness.

Each person has a fixed life span. Will it be twenty, fifty, or a hundred years? Only God knows. But what is that compared with eternity? Absolutely nothing! Therefore, the conquest of the Kingdom of Heaven, begun on this earth, must be the first and greatest goal of our existence. ✧

*By means of the Sacraments, the Church accomplishes even greater wonders now than in days of old, in benefit of those suffering spiritual infirmity*

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Homily during Holy Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

<sup>1</sup> ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. *In Epistolam ad Romanos*, hom. IX, n.3: MG 60, 471.

<sup>2</sup> ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. Homilia XXXII, n.2. In: *Obras*, vol. I: *Homilias sobre el Evan-*

*gelio de San Mateo (1-45)*. (Ed. 2). Madrid: BAC, 2007, p.637-638.

<sup>3</sup> KIDDUSHIN. Y 66cd. In: BONSIRVEN, SJ, Joseph (Ed.). *Textes rabbiniques des deux premiers siècles chrétiens*. Roma:

Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1955, p.419.

<sup>4</sup> ST. JEROME. Commentarius in Evangelium Matthæi, L.I (1,1-10,42), c.10, n.23. In: *Obras Completas*, vol. II: *Comentario a Mateo y otros*

*escritos*. Madrid: BAC, 2002, p.109.

<sup>5</sup> ST. GREGORY THE GREAT. *Homiliæ in Evangelia*. L.II, hom.9, n.4. In: *Obras*. Madrid: BAC, 1958, p.679.

# Justice and Mercy: Characteristics of the Good Shepherd

The present world could well be compared to a pasture in which we find faithful lambs, lost sheep, ravenous wolves and even wolves disguised in sheep's clothing. How should the true shepherd treat each one of these?



✠ João Luís Ribeiro

**O**f all the parables composed by the Divine Teacher, perhaps none sets out the criteria for rulers better than the parable of the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn 10:1-30). Here Our Lord presents himself as the true guide, support and father of a multitude of sheep who listen to His voice and follow Him.

Care for the flock, far from being a mere pastime or diversion, constitutes an office of great responsibility: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel, that feed themselves,” said God to Ezekiel (34:2). It is the shepherd’s task to strengthen the weak sheep and to traverse valleys and mountains to find the one that is lost, but without neglecting the strong ones, keeping the fold safe from the attack of wolves, especially since some dare to disguise themselves in sheep’s clothing (cf. Ez 34:16; Mt 7:15).

In this context, the shepherd cannot allow himself to be deceived, in the name of a spurious “mercy”, by the “naive” bleating of the animal that enters the fold as if it were a harmless lamb, hidden under the dingy guise of second-rate wool. How should we describe the Catholic who, overcoming innumerable obstacles, descends to the bottom of the abyss at his own peril,

there lovingly gathers a cunning wolf in his arms, sets this fruit of his charitable apostolate loose in the sheepfold and, after a long and tender look at the new “lamb” in “fraternization” with the others, goes to rest on the laurels of such a brilliant achievement?

On the other hand, there is something else – perhaps more difficult – that the good shepherd needs to know: how to differentiate between these intruders and those sheep that, although straying, withdrawn, uncouth and dirty, are still sheep, and should not be driven out with blows, for they will only meet with death outside the fold.

How to proceed in such cases? Perhaps the eloquent example of St. Bernard of Clairvaux will shed some light on the matter. Even if he lived many centuries before us, he seems to shine out for all generations as a model of a good shepherd.

## *Schism in the Holy Church*

Grave, precarious, obscure, but at the same time simple: this is how the paradoxical European situation looked in the 1130s.

Holy Church was shaken in its unity. Two prelates claimed to be popes. It is impossible to think of a situation of greater import and com-



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**It is the shepherd's task to strengthen the weak sheep and find the lost, but without neglecting the strong ones, guarding the flock from wolves**

“The Good Shepherd”, by Marten van Cleve



Urmelbeauftragter (CC by-sa 3.0)

**Through a prophetic mission, St. Bernard had the role of supporting Christ's flock**

St. Bernard of Clairvaux - Church dedicated to him in Frankfurt (Germany)

plexity, especially since the elections of both parties took place under ambiguous conditions and seemed irregular.

The city of Rome was in the hands of the Antipope Anacletus II. The real Pope, Innocent II, was forced to take temporary refuge in France, a nation that soon adhered to the Pontiff. England and Spain, among others, also remained faithful to the legitimate Successor of Peter.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that it involved not only the spiritual order, but also the temporal. The throne of the Holy Roman Empire was disputed between Lothar, legitimate heir and faithful to Innocent, and the Duke of Swabia, a follower of Anacletus. The Antipope also had the support of William X, Duke of Aquitaine, and Roger of Sicily, “the most competent military and political ruler of his time.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite all of this, the solution proved to be very simple: while the faithful seemed to be lost “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36), everything was clear for one man. This figure, whose task it was to support Christ’s flock, carrying out a prophetic mission, was none other than St. Bernard.

***Zeal in rescuing a lost sheep***

Although the great nations had taken their sides regarding the Successor of Peter, they did not cease to suffer internal divisions, even if on a relatively smaller scale. Let us consider what was happening in the French city of Tours.

In 1133, when the Episcopal See was vacant, an ambitious deacon named Philip had himself elected for the rank of bishop and immediately ran to the Antipope, Anacletus II, to make his appointment official. Since many irregularities had occurred in this election, the clergy of Tours met again and chose a new successor.

It is moving to note the way in which St. Bernard, upon learning of the affair, chose to treat this insurgent, who happened to be a close friend of his. The Saint’s prophetic discernment allowed him to see in him not an obstinate wolf but a misguided sheep. We learn of this from a letter written by the *Doctor Mellifluus* to Philip, while the latter was still usurping the chair at Tours:

“I grieve for you, most beloved Philip. [...] My grief is not worthy of mockery, but of compassion, for it is not born of flesh or blood, nor of the loss of passing things, but of yourself, Philip. I cannot express to you more explicitly the great cause of this pain: Philip is in danger.

“And when I say this, I am referring to the grave weeping of the Church, which in other times carried you in her womb and saw you sprout like a lily (cf. Hos 14:6), laden with heavenly gifts. [...] But – oh! – ‘how the finest

colour is changed’ (Lam 4:1). What a deep disappointment for the France that begot you and raised you!”<sup>2</sup>

The sin committed not only wounded the holy abbot, but offended and saddened first of all Our Lord Jesus Christ and, with Him, the Holy Church. However, the knowledge of the insult done to God may not be enough to convert a sinner. It is also necessary to remind him of the danger incurred by his soul:

“If you disdain all that I have said to you and pay no heed to motives, on my part I will not lose the fruit of this letter which is born of my love, but you shall answer for your contempt before the terrible tribunal of God.”<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, even this was not enough. St. Bernard, appointed papal legate to settle the matter at Tours, dismissed Philip from his post. The latter, cast down from the height to which he had undeservedly risen, went to complain to Anacletus, who swore him in as Archbishop of Taranto.

***Shepherds who behave like wolves***

Let us leave aside this stubborn character to consider a second case, from a few years earlier, in which St. Bernard showed a very different attitude towards another prelate, namely Gerard, Bishop of Angoulême.

A man of rare qualities, he readily distinguished himself as a theologian, orator and writer. His intellectual abilities were, however, accompanied by great greed. His thirst for power led him to obtain from Paschal II the post of papal legate in various regions of France, a dignity he retained during the reigns of the three subsequent Popes.

Once the schism had been introduced into the heart of the Church, the proud prelate also asked Innocent II for the post. The Pope, however, being aware of his unworthiness, refused the request. As a result, Gerard immediately joined Anacletus, receiving the desired position from the hands of the Antipope and becoming his staunch

collaborator; moreover, he began to persecute those who remained faithful to the true Successor of Peter.

In 1132, St. Bernard was compelled to address a letter to the Bishops of Aquitaine denouncing Gerard's crime. If we did not know the vigour of holy souls, we would not think it came from the *Doctor Mellifluus*:

"The enemy of the Cross of Christ – and I say this weeping – has the temerity to expel from their seats the saints who do not render homage to the beast, which 'opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His name and His dwelling' (Rv 13:6). He wishes to raise one altar against another altar and is not ashamed to confuse the licit with the illicit. He tries to replace some abbots with others, and some bishops with other bishops, excluding Catholics in order to promote schismatics. [...] He traverses land and sea to make a bishop who will become a son of hell, twice as guilty as himself (cf. Mt 23:15)."

However, the impetus and the fury of these imprecations were not due to mere personal disagreements, but to the fact that he who should be a shepherd had become a wolf. In another letter, addressed to Godefroy de Loroux, a famous writer of the time, the holy abbot expresses his great indignation with these bad shepherds:

"That beast of the Apocalypse, to whom was given a blasphemous mouth and allowed to wage war against the consecrated (cf. Rv 13:5-7), sits in the chair of Peter, 'as a lion prepared for the prey' (Ps 16:12). Moreover, another beast howls shrilly beside you, 'as a young lion dwelling in secret places' (Ps 16:12). The one is fiercer and the other more cunning, but both are united together 'against the Lord and His anointed' (Ps 2:2)."

### **Death of the two prelates**

Two bishops, with equally sinful conduct, received different treatment



**Two bishops with equally sinful conduct received different treatment from Bernard**

Detail of "The Entrance of St. Bernard into Milan", by Vicente Berdusán - Museum of Zaragoza (Spain)

from Bernard of Clairvaux. What was the end of these men upon whom the hand of a Saint rested, in one case to drive him away with violence and in the other to point the way back to the fold?

The Mellifluous Doctor had a long wait before seeing the prodigal son return to his father's house from afar (cf. Lk 15:20). Only several years later, in 1139, did the winds of justice blow against that house built on sand (cf. Mt 7:26-27). When the unity of the Holy Church had been restored, Innocent called a Council and deposed all the prelates who had formerly supported Anacletus.

Deprived of the Diocese of Taranto and barred from exercising liturgical functions, Philip found refuge in the Cistercian cloister of Clairvaux, where he lived out his last years under the care and protection of St. Bernard. With a sincere heart, the penitent made profound amends and earned new benevolence from the Saint, who after a certain time wrote to the then-reigning Pope Eugene III, beseeching Philip's total absolution:

"I have another matter which I do not mix with the others, because it touches and distresses me more than the others, and demands the most special insistence of my supplication. Our Philip had exalted himself and was humbled; but he humbled himself again and was not exalted, as if the Lord had not said both things (cf. Mt 23:12)."

This request shows the extent of his esteem for a sheep that had allowed itself to be led back by the Good Shepherd. By this letter, the holy Abbot obtained for Philip permission to resume the exercise of his priestly ministry.

Gerard had the diametrically opposite fate; everything indicates that he died in disgrace in 1136 "without having shown the least sign of repentance."

### **St. Bernard: a bad shepherd?**

If St. Bernard had shown the same kindness to Gerard that he did to Philip, would we not also find in him a contrite penitent? After all, mercy always saves... Was the Mellifluous Doctor wrong in his approach? Did his firm and pointed language come from a heart insensitive to dialogue and devoid of charity?

This is what seems to leap out at us as we contemplate these facts. However, in the very life of Our Lord we read that the rich young man, whom the Divine Master looked upon with love, refused the call to be an Apostle (cf. Mk 10:21-22). Blindly peace-seeking spirits would also be shocked to witness the divinely sweet lips of Jesus declaring, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!", "White-washed sepulchres," "Serpents! Brood of vipers" (Mt 23:27, 33).

Our Lord said: "I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:15). He is the model of how to treat wolves and sheep, of how to know when to



cast out the moneychangers and when to forgive the adulterous woman, to drive away an unrepentant sinner or to rescue one who can still be saved. If we take a closer look at St. Bernard's approach, we can recognize that it was not arbitrary, but governed by this prophetic insight.

### *An example to follow*

However, the great problem underlying this one, the question that cannot be silenced is the one posed at the beginning of our article: how to differentiate between the sheep that have gone astray and the wolves that threaten the flock, so that we do not make mistakes?

Centuries after St. Bernard, the incomparable Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard – his spiritual son, in fact – delivered a eulogy which, we believe, sums up the main criteria for the good shepherding of souls.

According to Dom Chautard, on careful examination of the history of the Abbot of Clairvaux, “the attentive reader of his life will be able to see to what an extent the interior life had made this man-of-God selfless. He only fell back on strong measures when he had clear evidence that all other means were useless. Often, too, he varied between gentleness and strength. After having shown his great love for souls by avenging some principle with holy indignation and stern demands for remedies, reparation, guarantees, and promises, he would at once display the tenderness of a mother in the conversion of those whom his conscience had forced him to fight.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, it is necessary before all else to be impartial – never to be moved by personal dislikes or attachments, but always for the sake of God's cause, with a pure intention

that practically rules out the possibility of error. Any subordinate, moreover, easily perceives when self-love is or is not feeding the actions of the superior. Secondly, we must be patient: many fall because they are weak, not hypocrites.

This, however, can never lead to compromise with the principles of Catholic doctrine and morals. Mercy is not synonymous with complicity or negligence. The former characterizes shepherds of the sheep, the latter, those who cover up for the wolves. When it becomes necessary to adopt the tactic of firmness, there must not be a moment's hesitation.

Finally, it is indispensable to nourish a deep interior life, which will always lead us to consult the Holy Spirit. In most cases, He will speak to us through the mouth of an experienced spiritual director, a Saint, or even a prophet like St. Bernard. ✧

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**To be able to differentiate between stray sheep and threatening wolves, according to the example of St. Bernard, impartiality, patience and a profound interior life are needed**

“The Good Shepherd”, by Thomas Cole - Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville (AR)

<sup>1</sup> LUDDY, Ailbe J. *São Bernardo de Claraval*. São Paulo: Cultor de Livros, 2016, p.276.

<sup>2</sup> ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. Carta 151. In: *Obras Completas*. 2.ed. Madrid: BAC, 2003, v.VII, p.535; 537.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p.537.

<sup>4</sup> ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. Carta 126, n.7. In: *Obras Completas*, op. cit., p.471. It should be noted that the followers of Anacletus were very hostile to the influence of St. Bernard, and would hardly accept the mildness of his mercy. Soon after the first mission of the Abbot of Clair-

vauux to the duchy of Aquitaine, the schismatics even destroyed the altar where he had offered the Holy Sacrifice (cf. LUDDY, op. cit., p.279).

<sup>5</sup> ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. Carta 125, n.1. In: *Obras Completas*, op. cit., p.459.

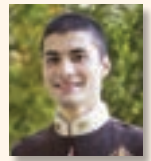
<sup>6</sup> ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. Carta 257, n.1. In: *Obras Completas*, op. cit., p.833.

<sup>7</sup> LUDDY, op. cit., p.328.

<sup>8</sup> CHAUTARD, OCSO, Jean-Baptiste. *The Soul of the Apostolate*. Charlotte (NC): TAN Books, 1974, p.135.

# St. Paul: Devotee of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?

We need mercy. And we can hardly approach this theme without evoking the famous devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But when did this devotion arise?



✦ Nelson José Camilo López

**T**he Book of Psalms is a true compendium of our relationship with God. It would be difficult to find a feeling, an emotion, a trial or a supplication that is not expressed with poetry in its verses.

However, among these inspired texts, Psalm 129 particularly calls our attention for the almost “scientific” precision with which it describes, step by step, a trial that must be undergone by every soul that takes sanctification seriously.

At a certain point in life, man discovers the unfathomable distance that separates him from perfection – and therefore from God. He realizes that he lacks the strength to cover this distance, and senses that shipwreck is nigh. At that moment, there is only one hope, one lifeline to be found: prayer, an infallible weapon that human pride always insists on relegating to the last resort.

Then the piercing cry bursts forth from his soul: “Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice!” (Ps 130:1-2). There is no assumption that this request will be heard; there is simply a cry. But God is only awaiting this attitude of humility to make His presence felt.

When the soul perceives the divine audience, what words does it utter? Curiously, it does not ask to be shown a way out of its plight. It feels that, in order not to succumb, it has immediate need of something else: it needs clemency. “If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?” (Ps 130:3).

Once requested, clemency comes and – oh wonder! – it is indeed the solution: “But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Ps 130:4).

### *A devotion for everyone*

Why do we venture to describe this process? To demonstrate that, sooner or later, God makes us go

through certain catastrophes in order to engrave a crucial truth in our souls: we need mercy. And we can hardly speak of mercy without evoking the famous devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This figure of utmost tenderness so supplies and satisfies our need for compassion that some have even postulated that it was “invented” specifically for this purpose.

Let us explain. It was only after the seventeenth century, with St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, that this form of worship spread throughout the Catholic world, and with such force that some authors have gone so far as to affirm that it was an invention of modern Catholicism, which had abandoned the lofty medieval concept of love, materializing it in an adoration of the physical Heart of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> According to others, St. Claude de la Colombière was inspired by a certain Puritan named Thomas Goodwin to idealize the devotion, and then he instigated St. Margaret Mary to propagate it.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, these postulates are false. Modern man’s affection deficit – or excess of sentimentality – cannot receive the credit for “creating” the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As early

*It seems that the first adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus lived very close to the time when it physically beat among men*

as the Middle Ages, in the silence of the cloisters, we already see St. Bernard mystically penetrating the side of Christ opened by the lance in order to find the pierced Heart inside and unveil the secrets of this great sacrament of goodness, the merciful bowels of our God.<sup>3</sup> And not only he, but other great names of twelfth-century spirituality followed the same path.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, this devotion goes back to even much before the Middle Ages. Jesus himself pointed to His “meek and humble” Heart as an example (Mt 11:29), and it seems that the first venerators of this Heart were very close to the time when it physically pulsated among men. Speaking in more specific terms, in perusing the writings of the Apostle St. Paul we find in him a true champion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus<sup>5</sup> and, in a certain sense, a precursor of the revelations of St. Margaret Mary.

### *What is the heart for St. Paul?*

The Hebrews of old understood the human being in a very concrete way, and never dissociated body and soul. We often find in the Old Testament allusions to the symbolic dimension of the eyes, the ears, the heart, the tongue, the hands and even the feet to evoke the totality of human activity. The heart, evidently, has primacy.<sup>6</sup>

St. Paul was an heir to this conception. If we analyse his letters, in many passages we find allusions to the heart as: the receptacle of charity or the source from which it proceeds (cf. Rom 5:5; 1 Tm 1:5), the tabernacle of consolations (cf. Col 2:2), of peace of soul (cf. Col 3:15), of obedience to God’s Word (cf. Rom 6:17), of mercy (cf. Col 3:12), of generosity (cf. 2 Cor 9:7) and of firm resolutions (cf. 1 Thes 3:13).

In summary, the heart appears as the centre of the personality, the

place in which the religious and moral life takes root and the orientation of existence is determined. To condense it all in a single word, as did Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira,<sup>7</sup> the heart symbolizes the *mentality* of man.

From this perspective, devotion to the Heart of Jesus acquires an unfathomable depth. We will return to this subject further on.

### *A synonym for the heart*

Despite such a wide range of meanings, it is undeniable that the heart has a very special relationship with love.



St. Paul, by Antonio del Ceraiolo - Museum of the Etruscan Academy and the City of Cortona (Italy)

*Perusing the writings of the Apostle St. Paul, we discover in him a true champion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

In this sense, the Apostle uses another term as an equivalent, rendered in Latin as *viscera* – bowels. The parity between the two is universally recognized, but the latter denotes an especially profound sentiment, as Fr. Bover comments: the word “*bowels* expresses greater tenderness, delicacy or depth of feeling than *heart*, as well as a certain movement or inclination towards the person loved. [...] The bowels symbolize love itself, in what it has of most intimate and intense, and the synthesis of the whole person, particularly in its appeal and communicativeness.”<sup>8</sup>

In fact, it must be said, St. Paul does not use the expression “heart of Jesus,” but rather the “bowels of Jesus Christ”. However, this in no way alters the profound theological similarity between his writings and St. Margaret’s revelations.

### *Jesus was betrayed by His love*

We find three particularly illuminating passages on St. Paul’s understanding of the love of Jesus: “I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, *who loved me and gave himself for me*” (Gal 2:20); “And walk in love, as *Christ loved us and gave himself up for us*” (Eph 5:2), “Husbands, love your wives, as *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*” (Eph 5:25).

In these pericopes, the Apostle expresses the three dimensions of Our Lord’s love: “Christ loved me,” “Christ loved us” and “Christ loved the Church.” We see here a predilection for every man, for humanity and, in a special way, for His Mystical Body.

St. Paul also makes it clear that Jesus’ love led Him to *give himself up*. The Redeemer himself expressed this in the words at the institution of the Eucharist, as the First Letter to the Corinthians recalls: “This is my body *which is for you*” (11:24).

One would say that Christ's affection for us was such that it "forced Him" to consummate the Passion and, not content with this, to become our food. The Saviour did not suffer on the Cross because Judas betrayed Him; the loathsome son of perdition arrived too late: Jesus had already been "betrayed" by His own love.

Yes, betrayed, because He willingly suffered, even though He knew that we would be unfaithful to His sacrifice. At least such was his complaint to St. Margaret Mary:

"Behold the heart which has so loved men that it has held back nothing, even exhausting and consuming itself in testimony of its love, and in return I receive only ingratitude from most of them, on account of their irreverence and sacrileges, and by the coldness and contempt with which they treat Me in this Sacrament of love. But what pains Me the most is that they are hearts consecrated to Me who treat Me thus."<sup>9</sup>

### *The Son teaches us sonship*

Although the Blood of Our Lord has been cast to the ground so frequently, it has not ceased to be fruitful. In another apparition to the seer, He revealed His loving Heart, saying: "This is the Teacher I give you, who will teach you everything you must do for love of Me. For this reason you shall be its beloved disciple."<sup>10</sup> The torrent of charity which flows from the depths of the Saviour is poured out upon those who are disposed to drink of it, and introduces them into a true school. What do we learn there?

Two interconnected Pauline verses shed light on this reflection: "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4:6); "For you did not receive the spirit of slav-

ery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Rom 8:15). That is to say, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son, infused into our hearts to give us adoptive sonship.

In other words, Our Lord, object of the Father's predilections, allows us to enjoy the same love that He receives. And not only that: as true

Man, who loves the Father with the most perfect human feelings and affections, He urges us to share in His ascending love.

Finally, when the Spirit of the Son is poured into our hearts, it makes them like His: the Son teaches us to be children of God.

### *Heart of Paul, Heart of Christ*

The culmination of this school is the exchange of hearts. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque describes that Our Lord once asked her for her heart and placed it in His own adorable Heart, in which He showed it to her as a small atom, consumed in that fiery furnace. Then He retrieved it from there, now with the appearance of a burning flame, and inserted it again into the place from which He had mystically taken it, saying to her: "Behold, my beloved, a precious pledge of my love, having placed in your breast a little spark of its living flame, that it may serve you as your heart."<sup>11</sup>

What does this vision mean? Let us remember that this organ symbolizes the mentality. From the moment that the most august supernatural phenomenon of exchange of hearts takes place, the soul begins to judge, feel, act and react in the likeness of the God-Man himself; it is a new life that begins to flourish.

The Apostle of the Gentiles undoubtedly also received this grace, as he shows clearly in one of his most emblematic phrases: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). St. John Chrysostom rightly concluded, commenting on this declaration: "Paul's heart, therefore, was the Heart of Christ."<sup>12</sup>

### *Make our hearts like unto Thine*

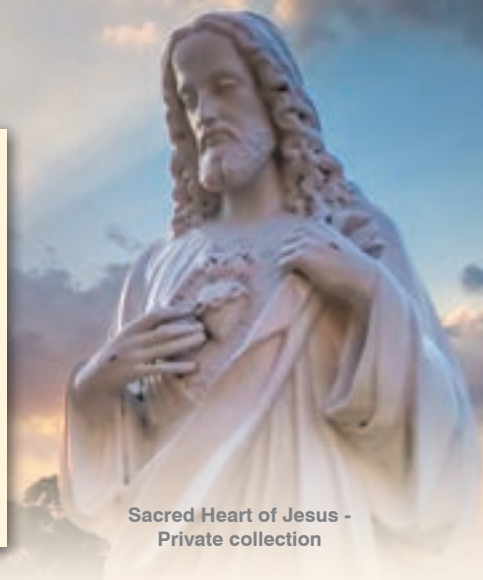
And should we adopt such a lofty goal for ourselves? Can we aspire to



François Boulay

Apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque - St. Patrick's Church, New Orleans (LA)

*Through exchange of hearts, the soul begins to judge, feel, and act in the likeness of the God-Man; did the Apostle not receive this grace?*



Sacred Heart of Jesus - Private collection

it without running the risk of falling into presumption? For an adequate solution to these questions, we once again yield the floor to St. Paul himself.

The Apostle exhorts us to be “imitators of God” (Eph 5:1), making progress in charity, even to the point of shedding blood if necessary, after the example of Our Lord. We must, he says elsewhere, be a “letter from Christ” (2 Cor 3:3), written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on the tablets of flesh of our hearts. In short, the answer is an emphatic yes!

In one of her missives, St. Margaret Mary also urges a certain nun to make the donation of her entire being, so that Our Lord, having purified it of all that displeases Him, might do with it whatever He wills. Ordinarily, the Saint continues, this is what He asks of His dearest friends: unity of will, so that one wants nothing but what He wants; unity of love; unity of heart, of spirit and of operation, to unite us to what He does within us.<sup>13</sup>

So sublime an aim might have seemed somewhat ethereal if both of these advocates of the Sacred Heart

*To mould our mentality to the Sacred Heart of Jesus means to know, adore and imitate Him, especially in the scandal of the Cross*

had not explained its significance to us with such clarity.

St. Paul exhorts us: “now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

Therefore, he continues, we must clothe ourselves with “compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience” (Col 3:8-10, 12).

Yes, Our Lord wants everything from those He loves: perfect conformity of life to His holy maxims,

which translates into complete abnegation and forgetfulness of self, as St. Margaret Mary says in another of her letters.<sup>14</sup>

In short, to mould our mentality to the Sacred Heart of Jesus means to know Him, adore Him and imitate Him in His integrity, especially where it shines most brightly, that is, in the scandal of the Cross.

St. Paul knew nothing but “Jesus Christ crucified” (1 Cor 2:2), and he was mystically nailed with Our Lord to the wood (cf. Gal 2:19). We are asked to have the same attitude, for “the Cross is the throne of the true lovers of Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup> ✧

<sup>1</sup> This is what the famous convert Joris-Karl Huysmans maintains (cf. *En route*. Paris: Tresse & Stock, 1895, p.341-342).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. BAINVEL, J. Cœur Sacré de Jésus (dévotion au). In: VACANT, Alfred; MANGENOT, Eugène (Dir.). *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1908, v.III, c.303.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. *Sermones in Cantica*. Sermo 61, n.4: PL 183, 1072.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. VANDENBROUCKE, François. *Storia della Spiritualità. Il Medioevo: XII-XVI*

*secolo*. 3.ed. Bologna: EDB, 2013, v.V, p.66.

<sup>5</sup> The work of Fr. José María Bover, SJ, will be of great use for this reflection. We recommend it to the reader interested in delving deeper into this matter: *San Pablo, maestro de la vida espiritual*. 3.ed. Barcelona: Casals, 1955, p.283-317.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. CÔTÉ, Julienne. *Cent mots-clés de la théologie de Paul*. Ottawa: Novalis, 2000, p.84.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Devoção ao Sagrado Coração de Jesus [Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus]*. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XIV. N.155 (Feb., 2011); p.10.

<sup>8</sup> BOVER, op. cit., p.288.

<sup>9</sup> ST. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE. *Autobiografía*. In: SÁENZ DE TEJADA, José María (Org.). *Vida y obras completas de Santa Margarida Maria Alacoque*. Quito: Jesús de la Misericordia, 2011, p.142.

<sup>10</sup> ST. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE. *Memoria escrita por orden de la M. Saumaise*. In: SÁENZ DE TEJADA, op. cit., p.172.

<sup>11</sup> ST. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE, *Autobiografía*, op. cit., p.115.

<sup>12</sup> ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. *Homilias sobre a Carta aos*

Romanos. *Homilia 32*, n.24. In: *Comentário às cartas de São Paulo*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2010, p.530.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. ST. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE. Carta 94. A la H. de la Barge, Moulins (octubre de 1688). In: SÁENZ DE TEJADA, op. cit., p.366.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. ST. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE. Carta 109. A la M. M. F. Dubuysson, Moulins (22 de octubre de 1689). In: SÁENZ DE TEJADA, op. cit., p.398.

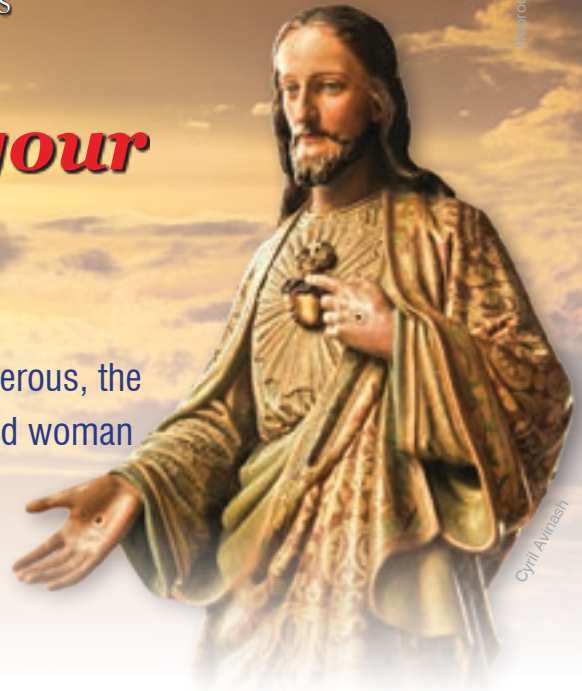
<sup>15</sup> ST. MARGARET MARY ALACOQUE. Carta 16. A la M. de Saumaise, Dijon (25 de agosto de 1682). In: SÁENZ DE TEJADA, op. cit., p.246.

# “My son, give Me your heart”

An ardent furnace of charity, as needful as it is generous, the Sacred Heart of Jesus expects from every man and woman redeemed by Him a “yes” to His call.



Sr. Maria Cecília Veas, EP 



One of nature’s most beautiful kinds of movement is the play of water throughout the universe. The clouds pour themselves out onto the ground below, watering and preparing the soil for the germination of plants, which embellish the earth and provide food, while other waters are solidified into immense glaciers. Then comes the summer, and the vehement heat forms vapour: the clouds are formed, followed again by rain, dew, frost or snow. It is the perpetual movement of an inanimate being that ascends in one state, and precipitates in another. Humanizing this mineral substance, one would say that this change and exchange of attributes is a rational one, an effect that returns to its cause as a duty of gratitude.

What a pale symbol of the relationship that should exist between Creator and creature! Nature is generous and obeys the laws of its driving force; man, however, tainted by egoism, tends to close in on himself instead of making his life a continuous act of praise, gratitude and restitution.

### *Creation and the Redemption: works of love*

Divine Providence could not give us greater proofs of love. It has created the heavens and the earth, plants, seas, rivers, fountains, every kind of beast, reptile and bird; all of these creatures serve us without ceasing. They are a reflection of the Creator for us and guarantee our survival. Is that all? No.

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you” (Jer 31:3). God created us in His image and like-

*Being the expression of divine love, the Incarnate Word wanted to make every step of His life a testimony to His unfathomable charity*

ness, endowed us with perfect powers, understanding and will – an immortal soul destined for eternal beatitude.

However, wanting to come into contact with us in a more tangible way, “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, [...] that the world might be saved through Him” (Jn 3:16-17). His love for His beloved creature overflowed its limits! Yes, God was seen on earth and lived among men.

The Incarnate Word came not only to be an expiatory victim, offering His life as a ransom for our faults; if this had been so, perhaps He would have died with the innocent children immolated by Herod. But, being the expression of divine love, He wanted to make every step of His life a testimony to His unfathomable charity.

For thirty-three years He breathed our air, He lived with those closest to Him under the veils of humanity. He gathered the Apostles around himself, had compassion on the hungry crowds, welcomed the little children, wept with Martha and Mary over the death of His friend Lazarus, praised upright hearts, healed the sick, freed

souls from the yoke of the devil, converted the wayward, went in search of sinners, and forgave them with the utmost mercy and compassion; in short, He went about on earth doing good (cf. Acts 10:38).

### *What does the Heart of Jesus lack?*

“Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1)! Yes, the hour had come to feed the fiery furnace of divine love with the wood of the Cross.

What wounded the Sacred Heart most during the Passion was human indifference and wickedness. And since no torment was spared Him, the Father allowed His Only-begotten to suffer at the hands of every category of men: He was persecuted by King Herod, judged by the governor Pilate, betrayed by one of His disciples, abandoned by the Apostles, hated and persecuted by chief priests, scribes and Pharisees; He was outraged by Gentiles, condemned by His own people; crucified by soldiers and, finally, reviled by a vile thief, His companion in death.

Where were the multitudes that had thronged to hear His preaching, that had benefited from so many wonders and prodigies? Where were the sick that were healed, the dead that were resurrected? Where, finally, were those whom He had freed from the clutches of the devil? Many were part of the wicked mob that insulted Him, aggravating the sufferings of His Passion...

He hoped to find at the foot of the Cross hearts burning with filial love, filled with compassion. But... such is ingratitude.

It is true that His Mother was there, and She was enough. But what pain must have been felt by a Redeeming Heart that had come to call all to conversion, to see himself universally abandoned, receiving as recompense

betrayal and condemnation to the most ignominious death?

Lacerated in His human figure, His vocal cords were still preserved intact; and that same voice that had said to the Samaritan woman, “Give me a drink” (Jn 4:7), now begged for the water of charity that would repair the enormous ingratitude: “I thirst” (Jn 19:28). He longed for the loving fidelity of those whom He had called. Immersed in abandonment, He gave up His spirit... The Redemption was consummated.

Folly of love, mystery of ingratitude!

“Does He deserve to be loved, or not; this God who has suffered so

*“The Sacred Heart of Jesus and the heart of man have thus become like two strings of a harp harmoniously tuned to vibrate together”*



Harp-playing Angel, by Gherardo Starnina - Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam (Netherlands). Previous page, Sacred Heart of Jesus - Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, Cotia (Brazil)

much, and adopted so many means to engage our love?”<sup>1</sup> St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori ponders.

In fact, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who as God rules over all things and has given us absolutely everything, has a need that only we can fill, according to His words to St. Mechtilde: “I have everything in profusion, except the heart of man which so often escapes Me...”<sup>2</sup>

Where does our heart go when it is not where it should be?

### *Like harp strings*

Many evils rage in our century, but none seems to be so mysterious and incurable as the torment of the heart. Creatures cannot fully satisfy it, not even carnal affection; pleasures, worldly honours, glories and riches bring nothing but agitation, apprehension and even despair in their wake, giving rise to bloodshed...

But there is really no mystery in this apparently tragic picture. The human heart has an imperative need to be united to Our Lord’s, for between the two there is a profound affinity that dates back to creation.<sup>3</sup>

As the First-born of God, “all things were created through Him and for Him” (Col 1:16). Thus, it is reasonable to suppose that, in forming the human heart, the Word did so with extremes of care and affection, providing it with the emotions, feelings and needs that He himself would want to experience in becoming incarnate.

In this heart He “embedded such profound aspirations, of which only His Divine Heart could echo and fully assuage. The Heart of Jesus and the heart of man have thus become like two strings of a harp harmoniously tuned to vibrate together, and so delicately linked to each other that the vibration of one of them would at once provoke a corresponding sound in the other.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, if the Heart of Jesus longs for ours and if our heart needs Him,

the logical solution to this need is inevitably to give ourselves to Him without reserve, not only out of a duty of justice – because “love is repaid with love” – but to fulfil this unfathomable divine plan.

### *Surrender and devotion... of what do they consist?*

As a vital organ, there are two movements that make up the beating of the heart: systole and diastole. Receiving blood, the heart circulates it throughout the body. If, on the contrary, instead of pumping, it were to only receive blood, death would soon follow. Thus, for the supernatural vitality in us to be complete, it is necessary for us to give constantly to God. We have already received everything; all that remains is for us to give! Now, specifically, what do we need to give to the Heart of Jesus?

When we wish to show our affection for someone, we should begin by not causing them grief, at the very least. If, then, we intend to love Jesus, we cannot be only souls rich in exterior and merely sentimental exercises of piety. No doubt it pleases Our Lord that we praise Him through wor-

ship, vocal prayers and ceremonies; after all, He also praised the Father when He prayed before His disciples. Above all, however, the Redeemer thirsts to possess our hearts.

Like faith, charity must be translated into works. This is how the Lord taught us: “If you love Me, you will keep my Commandments” (Jn 14:15).

“I keep the Commandments!” someone might say. “I do not kill, I do not steal, I pray every day”... There are many souls who limit the practice of the Ten Commandments to a few daily precepts, but who “do not trouble themselves to repress their bad inclinations, to destroy their bad hab-

*True devotion is that which leads us to consecrate ourselves entirely to the service of God, giving Him our whole heart*

its, to avoid occasions of sin; who give way as soon as temptation arises, or murmur as soon as contradiction and disappointments befall them. With them, affective love is full of illusions; it is a fire of straw that quickly burns away into ashes.”<sup>5</sup>

True devotion – expressed in the etymology derived from the Latin *devovere*, that is, to *dedicate oneself* – is that which leads us to consecrate ourselves entirely to the service of God, without reserving anything for our own selfishness. “I need hearts that love, souls who make reparation, victims who immolate themselves... but above all, I need souls who abandon themselves,”<sup>6</sup> Our Lord declared to Sister Josefa Menendez.

Dear reader, as you conclude these lines, think that at this moment Jesus Christ is standing before you, His Heart on fire, calling out to you: “My son, give Me your heart” (Prv 23:26). God seeks your company, as when He once asked Adam: “Where are you?” (Gn 3:9) Or again, when He asked St. Peter: “Do you love Me?”

What will you answer Him?

Fear not, frail soul; He is your Father, your Lord, your Creator and



Our Lady of Hearts - Monastery of St. Clare, Quito (Ecuador)

Juan Carlos Villagomez



# Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

**I**, [your name]..., consecrate and surrender to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ, my person, my life, my difficulties and my sufferings, that I may henceforth live only for His love and glory.

It is my firm and unwavering purpose to be His entirely, to do everything for His love and renounce wholeheartedly everything that could displease His divine Heart.

O Sacred Heart, I choose You as the sole object of my love, the protector of my life, the pledge of my salvation, the support of my weakness and the atoner for all the sins of my whole life.

O mild and bountiful Heart, be likewise my refuge at the hour of death, my justification before God, and ward off from me the penalty of His just wrath.

O loving Heart, I place my trust entirely in You. While I fear everything from my own malice, I hope everything from Your goodness.

Destroy in me whatever may displease You or be opposed to You, and let Your pure love imprint You so deeply upon my heart that it will be impossible for me ever to forget You or be separated from You.

O Sacred Heart, by Your goodness, I implore You, let my name be deeply engraved in You, for in Your service and in Your love I will live and die.

Amen.

*Prayer composed by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque*



Gustavo Kralj

Apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque - Church of St. Peter, Lima (Peru)

Redeemer. Do not resist; give Him your heart in an attitude of filial abandonment, knowing that He will provide for all your needs. Fight for Him against sin, renounce worldly pleasures, sacrifice yourself for the expansion of His reign on earth. When you leave this world, you will then see how magnificent a path

you have chosen: not the flowery, thornless, lying path, but the way of self-denial, of sacrifice, of the cross, and therefore the way of pardon, a thousand times blessed, that will lead you to Paradise!

Let us ask the Immaculate Heart of Mary to introduce us definitively into the Sacred Heart of her Divine

Son, and to prepare a throne in our heart so that her beloved Jesus may reign there.

If a great number of souls are willing to do this, we may be certain that the first melodies will soon begin to sound of a new era, Marian and heavenly, where all hearts will be one with Jesus and Mary! ✧

<sup>1</sup> ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA LIGUORI. *A prática do amor a Jesus Cristo*. 7.ed. Aparecida: Santuário, 1996, p.49.

<sup>2</sup> GRANGER, OSB. *O amor do Sagrado Coração explicado segundo os escritos de Santa*

*Mechtilde*. Belo Horizonte: Divina Misericórdia, 2017, p.85-86.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. SCHRIJVERS, José. *O Divino Amigo*. 2.ed. São Paulo: Cultor de Livros, 2021, p.134.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, p.134.

<sup>5</sup> MARMION, Columba. *Jesus Cristo nos seus mistérios*. São Paulo: Cultor de Livros, 2017, p.395.

<sup>6</sup> CHARMOT, SJ, François. *Apelo ao amor. Mensagem do Coração de Jesus ao mundo e sua mensageira Sór Josefa Menéndez*. 4.ed. Contagem: Littera Maciel, 1998, p.133.

# Abyss of All Virtues

To be true devotees of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, it is not enough to know and love only one of His aspects; it is necessary to have a vision of the whole range of virtues that His Heart represents.



✦ Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

**I**n the prospect of treating of a topic so dear to me as devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, my way of being would lead me to try to study, reflect and meditate until I have been able to know everything possible on the subject. In my opinion, this is also how love should be: made up to the maximum degree of sentiment, but also of reasoning, by which we try to understand to the maximum degree what is felt. From the sum of these two factors comes true love.

Nevertheless, the duties of my apostolate do not allow me to act according to this principle, at least not as much as I would like. So, even though I have not been able to do in-depth studies on the subject, one always knows something, and I propose that we enter into the subject making use, above all, of what we feel with regard to this devotion.

## *Two conceptions of the heart*

First of all, I would like to analyse two distinct, but not contrary, conceptions of what the heart represents.

One is the modern conception, according to which the heart symbolizes pure sentiment, divorced from reason. In this view, one's heart should thrill at the sight of something that creates a good impression, causes en-

dearment, and produces a feeling of goodness and affinity.

Something along these lines happens to me, for example, whenever I see a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that is in a church dedicated to Him in the city of São Paulo. When I see that statue, I remember a series of emotions of a religious nature that I have had while standing before it, which I certainly do not consider bad in any way. But I ask myself: does the heart represent only this?

We ought to consider that the ancients understood the heart in a deeper sense: for them, the heart represented the sum total of all that man knows and loves. With a love, however, according to the conception that I pointed out above, that is, feeling, reasoning, judging and, as the case may be, adhering and loving. Everything that man loves in this way constitutes a whole that forms the mentality of man, which is represented by the heart.

Considered in this light, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus acquires an unfathomable depth.

## *Different aspects of the same scene*

Let us imagine how someone who knew Our Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly life should love Him to the point of being able to recognize

the majestic and gentle timbre of His voice.

Let us suppose that this person had seen a gaze full of His goodness and mercy upon someone and, on the other hand, had contemplated Him scourging the moneychangers of the Temple or replying “*Ego sum*” (Jn 18:5) to the Temple guards, and all of them falling to the ground. I believe that, if I were a painter, I would be able to do at least fifty paintings representing the different aspects that must have been reflected in Him at this moment.

The same could be said of the scene in which, from the height of the Cross, between groans He said: “Woman, behold, your son!” and then to the Apostle St. John: “Behold, your Mother!” (Jn 19:26-27). With what countenance did Jesus say this? Or, again, when He said to the good thief: “today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). In this episode we need to consider not only His words to the good thief, but also His icy silence towards the bad thief. How expressive is the silence of a person like Our Lord Jesus Christ!

Well, if I were given the grace to witness all this, I believe that, despite my efforts to learn about mentalities, I would forget it all and pay attention only to Him. Obviously, I would also pay attention to Our Lady and a little

to the Apostles, but to nothing else. Above all, I would try to know Our Lord as well as possible. Not out of desire for control or mistrust, but on the contrary, in order to be able to love Him and to give myself to Him more and more.

***What might Our Lord's mentality be like?***

Having adopted this conception of the heart, we can ask ourselves what the mentality of Christ must be like. The answer proves to be very difficult, because the theme is so lofty that, being here below, one is afraid to ascend. On the other hand, when one has reached the top there is no desire to descend.

If we consider the human nature of Our Lord, we can try to make at least something explicit, but when it comes to divinity, the subject reaches such heights that it becomes impossible for man to reach it.

Faith teaches us that Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate who came to dwell among men. In His Person, the human and divine natures are united hypostatically, in a way unsurpassable and unattainable by any human creature. Not even Our Lady, to whom I believe the gift of Eucharistic permanence was given, can attain a union with God comparable to that of Jesus' human nature.

The relationship between humanity and divinity in the Person of the Word is something so extraordinary that St. Louis, King of France, had the beautiful custom, later adopted by the whole Church, of bowing down at the point in the Creed that says: *Et Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.*

***The greatest joy and the most terrible suffering***

What joy must such a union produce in Jesus' human nature? Without taking into consideration His divinity, by which Christ is the very source of all joy.



Mário Shinoda

Dr. Plinio in the early 1980s

*Considering the heart as a representation of everything that man knows and loves, how must the Sacred Heart of Jesus be?*

Yet by some mystery, during the prayer in the Garden, this joy seems to have given way to a terrible sense of abandonment, which led Him to ask: "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me" (Lk 22:42).

Even more eloquent is His cry from the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mk 15:34). What took place at that moment with this union of the human and divine natures that could have caused so great a sentiment that shortly afterwards led Him to say "*Consummatum est*" (Jn 19:30) and to surrender His spirit?

We see that, in spite of the union of Our Lord's human nature with the divine, He suffered. And by a certain balance that there usually is in this life between happiness and sorrow, considering the joys of Jesus we can

measure how profound must have been His sufferings.

I believe that one of the most poignant sufferings that Christ went through was that of the inexplicable, for no human pain is so great as that of suffering without knowing the reason. Although Our Lord knew everything as God, and knew that He was not blameworthy, in some mysterious way He must have felt this form of pain, otherwise His suffering would not have been complete.

I have the impression that just as God, after creating every being that exists in the universe, considered the whole and saw that it was better (cf. Gn 1:31), in an analogous way Our Lord, after having undergone all the torments of the Passion, must have looked upon the beauty of the whole of His sufferings and thought: "Everything is offered; whatever I could suffer, I have suffered for the redemption of the human race. And then He cried: "*Consummatum est.*"

***A mentality composed of harmonious opposites***

Now we must keep in mind those aspects of grandeur and fortitude of soul that we see in the last acts of the Passion of the Divine Redeemer as we analyse every moment of His life on earth. Indeed, He who suffered



Photos: Gustavo Kraijl

Scenes from the life of Our Lord, by Giotto di Bondone - Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padua (Italy).

From left to right: The Presentation of the Child Jesus, the expulsion of the moneychangers from the Temple, the way to Calvary

*How to combine in a single vision the strength of the Man on the Holy Shroud, with the newborn Child, opening His arms and smiling?*

such a death is the same One who caressed the little children when they came to Him, and of whom He said: "Let the children come to Me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the Kingdom of God" (Mk 10:14). There is no person, of whatever age, who, on hearing these words, is not affected by them – for who does not feel small before Our Lord? – and therefore thinks: "So there is also a place for me with Jesus."

Let us remember that these words, overflowing with tenderness, came from the lips of the One who, during the Passion, showed unequalled strength and resolution.

But how can the human soul put all these aspects together in a single picture, so that at the sight of Our

Lord it may consider Him as the One who drove the moneychangers from the Temple, and at the same time see in Him the Master who with unspeakable goodness caressed little children, cured the sick, and spread joy, consolation, serenity, health and delight around Him? Moreover, how can we combine in a single vision the strong, unique and incomparable Man visible on the Holy Shroud, with the newborn Child Jesus, opening His arms and smiling at Our Lady?

Even though, upon opening His arms He already held them in the form of a cross, foreshadowing that He was born to be crucified, how could anyone imagine that in that Child, so sweet, innocent and tender, there was also the Hero who would endure the most terrible sufferings that have ever been or ever will be seen until the end of the world?

***The drawbacks of a unilateral vision***

How then can we condense all these perfections of the God-Man into a single vision?

They are so many that we would tend to be satisfied with the consideration of only one. Indeed, everyone worships Him in the way he feels called to do, but in my particular case,

for by my way of being, I would never be satisfied to worship Him for just one of these aspects, without seeking to join them to the others, so as to form, even summarily, a notion of the whole.

Therefore, if I could know Him in this life, what I would most like to admire in Him would be the transitions of states of mind, so that in these variations I might see the harmony they formed.

On the ceiling of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus<sup>1</sup> there is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century-style painting that has the characteristic, typical of the tendency of the men of that century, to represent things exactly as they are in the practical reality. From this arose the school of art called Realism. To me this is not true art, because the value of a work is in reproducing something imponderable that only the eyes of authentic observers can capture.

If reproducing things just as we see them has artistic value, the most perfect of the arts should be photography. Now, the greatest shortcoming of both Realism and photography lies in not portraying the transitions of soul that I mentioned above. For this reason, in the paintings of Jesus that follow this school, one can see that the artist chose a single aspect of Him and tried to represent it. And the

attempt is generally made to represent the infinite mercy of Our Lord, which, though very right, is incomplete.

In the Litany of the Heart of Jesus there is the invocation: Heart of Jesus, abyss of all virtues. This means that the depth of His virtues is such that it constitutes an abyss for men. We could even call it the firmament of all virtues, considering the firmament as being an ascending abyss.

### *Painting forgotten beauties*

How good it would be if someone were to paint pictures representing other episodes in the life of Christ. For example, His meditation in the desert when He spent forty days there in fasting and prayer. We can even imagine Him standing by a rock in the middle of an arid landscape, with only commonplace and sparse vegetation in contrast to the grandeur of that scene; in the distance, vast expanses covered with beautiful sands that stretch all the way to the horizon, where we see a blazing sunset, punctuated by the profile of Jesus.

Or, again, a painting could be made of Christ in an affectionate attitude towards Our Lady. If He took satisfaction in contemplating the universe, how much would it not please Him to gaze upon Her who was superior to the whole universe! So, to represent Him looking into the eyes of Mary Most Holy, who is filled with enchantment for Jesus. As Creator, He thinks: “My masterpiece!” and, as Son: “My Mother! What perfection!”

What would we not give in exchange for contemplating a scene like that, even if through a keyhole? After seeing it, why go on living? For if someone were to say to me, “Look at the sea, how lovely!”, I, who love the sea so much, would think, “What is it to see the sea after having seen Mary?”

All in all, I would like to see the attempt made to represent each of His

states of spirit, for I am not content to adore and adhere only to His mercy.

### *Consideration of all that resonated and pulsed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

Another thing that I would very much like to do would be to make a collection of the timbres of Our Lord’s voice, for example, while He was teaching. He being the Divine Master, what clarity, wisdom, depth, vastness of horizons and simplicity must have shone forth in His timbre of voice!

Perhaps even more than the timbres of voice, what would one not give to have the representation of some of Jesus’ gazes? To mention just two: How was the look He gave to St. Peter, to the point of converting him and making him weep bitterly with repentance all his life? Or the last gaze He directed to His Mother at the foot of the Cross. What affection, appreciation and love must have been manifested in that gaze! On the other hand, what would His stern look have been like, casting the moneychangers out of the Temple? or His displeased look at Pilate; or His look of reproach at Annas and Caiaphas?

This entire ensemble is contained in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in which it resonated in such a way that in each of these various moments it must have pulsed differently, sometimes more intensely, sometimes less.

*To love the Sacred Heart of Jesus entirely means to adore and adhere to all of the virtues and states of spirit held within that Heart*

Therefore, to have a true devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus it is not enough for us to know and love only one of these aspects; we need to have a vision of the whole that it represents. This, evidently, no one is capable of achieving without the special help of grace. However, for those who aspire and strive to know and love this magnificent, unspeakable and priceless whole as much as possible, this grace will come at a certain moment. ✧

Taken, with adaptations from:  
*Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XIV.  
N.155 (Feb., 2011); p.10-15

<sup>1</sup> Shrine located in the Higienópolis neighbourhood in São Paulo.



Thomas Hummel (CC by-sa 4.0)

The Sacred Heart of Jesus -  
Church of St. Simon and St. Jude,  
Deudesfeld (Germany)

# Conquered by Divine Love from Childhood

Patroness of Belgium, St. Lutgardis was graced with a mystical exchange of hearts with Our Lord. Thus confirmed in the certainty of Jesus' love for her, she became, from then on, a living flame of charity.



✦ Bruna Piva

**I**n the distant year of 1182, a little girl with a bright and lively gaze was born into a family in Tongres, a town in Belgium, and she was christened Lutgardis.

As her personality developed, she showed a remarkable appetite for the supernatural life and an almost experiential sense of God's presence, which she mixed, however, with a lively taste for the pleasures of worldly vanity and human friendships. She was drawn, at one and the same time, to holy cogitations and to wearing clothes that enhanced her beauty, which was indeed exceptional.

All this, however, was nothing more than her subconscious thirst for the infinite, which can only be satisfied by God. Her heart longed for divine love, without knowing exactly what it consisted of or how to attain it. And she remained in this state of inconstancy until divine mercy deigned to come to rescue her from her misery.

### *From early betrothal to religious life*

Lutgardis' father, a merchant, wanted a promising worldly future for his daughter. For this reason, before she was even twelve years old, he ar-

ranged a very financially advantageous marriage for her, and collected a rich dowry for this purpose. However, the precious treasure so carefully accumulated was lost at the bottom of the sea when the ship carrying it sank...

Unable to raise a new dowry, the covetous merchant appealed to his wife, who had a separate estate, begging her to save their daughter's profitable marriage. But she, being a pious woman, had already partly discerned the supernatural design which hung over the girl, and refused to yield her inheritance unless it was for entrance into a convent. "She bluntly declared to her little daughter that if she want-

*By her mother's choice, Lutgardis entered a Benedictine monastery, without imagining that there she would find what she was seeking*

ed to become the bride of Christ, she would have a dowry. Otherwise, 'she would have to marry a cowherd.'"<sup>1</sup>

In the end, her mother's will won out, and Lutgardis entered the Benedictine monastery of St. Catherine in Saint-Trond as a kind of postulant, where she received instruction and took part in the community's daily routine, although without much enthusiasm for religious life.

### *A dangerous friendship*

Now the community into which she had entered – as was sadly the case with so many others of the Benedictine Order at that time – had drifted far from its original fervour and faithful observance of the rule... Taking advantage of the situation, a young man who had become enchanted by Lutgardis' beauty began to pay her frequent visits in the monastery. The two spent long hours in the parlour in worldly and sentimental conversations and, far from being reproached, they were imitated in this by several others in the convent.

However, this wrong behaviour was the cue that Providence was waiting for to intervene definitively in the young woman's life. In one of these

dangerous encounters, as later with St. Teresa of Jesus, Christ himself appeared to her with dazzling brightness. Directing her astonished gaze to His side pierced by the lance, He said: "Seek no more the pleasure of this affection that is unsuitable for you. Here, forever, is what you must love and how you must love; here, in this wound, I promise you the purest joys." Lutgardis was filled with fear and love, and, roused from her folly, rebuked her friend, "Depart from me, bait of death, aliment for crime; to another love I belong."

On that occasion, Lutgardis discovered, at last, the mysterious object of her desires. That for which she so longed and which she sought as if groping, now became known to her. Her soul, exulting with joy, could at last exclaim like the spouse in the Song of Songs: "I found him whom my soul loves" (Sg 3:4).

Freed from all worldly affections, she decided to walk the road to holiness and, defying the relaxed customs of her monastery, she voluntarily imposed on herself a routine of enclosure and solitude in order to unite herself to her new Love and to know Him more closely.

As so commonly occurs with upright souls, her companions soon became indignant with her when they perceived in this change a reproach to the general laxity. Isolation, temptations and trials began to beset her soul. Nevertheless, Lutgardis continued to progress in fervour and her prayer life.

***"I want your Heart!"***

Her special intimacy with the Lord one day allowed her an attitude that few would dare to imitate.

Having been favoured with the gift of healing the smallest discomfort of those who came to her, she one day grew weary of being continually occupied in this task, which diminished her prayer time. She complained to Jesus:



St. Lutgardis exchanges her heart with Jesus - Abbey of St. Godelieve, Bruges (Belgium)

*The same mystical exchange occurred between Christ and Lutgardis that other Saints devoted to the Sacred Heart would experience*

"Lord, why have You given me such a grace? Now I hardly have time to be alone with You! I beg You to take it away. But give me another grace, something better!"

"What grace do you want Me to give you in exchange?" Christ asked her.

Being a member of the choir, Lutgardis thought that it would be useful for her to have a miraculous comprehension of Latin and thus be able to recite the Psalms with greater devotion. And, in fact, she obtained the desired change. However, she soon felt completely frustrated again... The new insights she gained into the Office did not fill her soul.

Behind all this was undoubtedly the hand of Providence, which with wise and affectionate didacticism revealed to the heart of the nun what she really lacked. Once again she turned to the Redeemer, recognizing that these intuitions served only to hinder her devotion instead of stimulating it.

Jesus asked her:

"What do you want, then?"

"Lord," she said, "I want your Heart."

"Do you want my Heart?"

Our Lord asked her: "It is I who want your heart."

To which Lutgardis replied:

"Take it, my beloved Lord; but take it in such a way that through the love of your Heart, closely united to mine, I may possess my heart only in You, so that it may remain forever safe under your protection."

Lutgardis then received a new life from Christ. He showed her His own pierced Heart, source of all grace, all love and all delights, and united her to himself, giving her His own Heart in exchange for hers. There took place

between Christ and her the mystical exchange that would later take place in the life of some other Saints especially devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, such as St. Gertrude, St. Matilda of Hackeborn and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.

At that moment, the divine Love that had begun to attract Lutgardis from her infancy gave itself completely to her. And the heart of the young nun, confirmed forever in the certainty of Jesus' infinite love for her, became a living flame of charity.

### *Departure for Aywières*

From that time on, Lutgardis intensified her life of prayer, penance and zeal in the observance of the rule, which increased the incomprehension of several of her sisters in the community. However, after living nine years there, the brilliance of her virtues overcame the meanness of many spirits and the sisters chose her to be their prioress. Lutgardis was only twenty-three years old.

To her, receiving this new office seemed a true catastrophe... She felt that at the head of a community she would not be able to fulfil her call to contemplation. Her attention then turned to the austere Cistercian monasteries that were flourishing in the Netherlands.

The new way of life embraced in these monasteries was not only distinguished by severe mortifications and penances, but, above all, it favoured mystical contemplation and perfect union with God in a very special way. Attracted by this, Lutgardis sought the advice of a wise preacher from Liège, called John of Lierre, who recommended that she resign her position as superior and leave her Order to join the newly founded

Cistercian monastery of Aywières in Brabant.

Lutgardis hesitated because the language spoken in that region was French and it would be impossible for her to understand her superiors and spiritual directors. She preferred the community of Herkenrode, situated in her own country, only a few kilometres from Saint-Trond. The Divine

Redeemer, however, intervened in her decision, telling her simply:

"It is my will that you go to Aywières, and if you do not go, I will have nothing more to do with you."

The nun left for her new destination, without consulting her community. In that beautiful and secluded panorama to the southwest of Brussels, behind the sacred walls of the Cistercian monastery, she found what she so desired.

### *Refuge of the afflicted and of sinners*

St. Lutgardis received many mystical graces during her monastic life. However, within the brevity of an article, it would be better to recount the fruits of these graces than the graces themselves, which would be of little or no value if they did not result in authentic works of virtue.

The main effect of these heavenly favours on Lutgardis' soul, especially that sublime exchange of hearts with the Saviour, was to instil in her a profound experience of God's predilection for her and, as a consequence, of His love for all men.

Thus, without abandoning her seclusion and her duties, she became the advocate of sinners and the mother of all those in spiritual need, as Blessed Mary of Oignies later testified on her deathbed: "There is no one in this world more faithful to the Lord than Mother Lutgardis, or anyone whose prayers have more power to deliver the souls in Purgatory. Nor is there anyone here on earth more effective in obtaining grace for sinners."<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, no one was more generous than she in embracing the difficulties and sorrows of the other sisters. One day, a nun named Hespelende, greatly oppressed by various



Detail of the Statue of the Sacred Heart -  
Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of  
Fatima, Cotia (Brazil)

*The heavenly favours  
she received instilled  
in her a profound  
certainty of the  
love of the Sacred  
Heart for her and  
for all mankind*



temptations and already on the verge of despair, sought out Lutgardis and implored her prayers. The distraught nun soon received the revelation that on Good Friday, during the adoration of the Holy Cross, the temptations would leave her, and her soul would be strengthened by grace, which is what happened.

### ***Strong against God!***

Another impressive demonstration of her zeal for souls came towards the end of her life. With failing health due to various diseases and completely blind for about nine years, Lutgardis was visited by an old friend who lived in the world. He confided that he had fallen into sin and, even after having repented and confessed, he could not regain his peace, and was downcast and unconvinced of divine forgiveness.

Lutgardis importuned Heaven with fervent prayers on his behalf, but to no avail. However, these apparent failures only served to nourish her faith, which became inflamed with a holy tenacity. Her ardent soul began “to struggle with the Lord; and when she saw at last that God persisted in withholding His mercy, she exclaimed: ‘Well then, erase, Lord, my name from the Book of Life, or else forgive this man his sin!’”<sup>3</sup>

She was sure that God would not blot out her name; she only wished to affirm to Jesus himself that His mercy is always invincible. And the Saviour, for His part, was pleased to hear the bold supplications and prayers of His spouse: “‘Behold, I have already forgiven him, because he has put his trust in you,’ Our Lord said to St. Lutgardis, ‘and not to him alone, but to all those who hope in you, and whom you love, I will also show my goodness and my love.’”<sup>4</sup>

In 1245, her magnificent trajectory of love, marked by numerous sufferings, penances, virtues and even miracles, came to an end. The Redeemer

appeared to her in a comforting vision, saying that within a year she would depart this life. He then made three requests of her: that she should give thanks to God for all the benefits she had received; that she should devote herself entirely to prayers for sinners before the throne of the Father; and that she should aspire with the most intense desire to be with Him forever. Having applied herself to these things with fidelity, Lutgardis died peacefully on June 16, 1246.

### ***“Love is repaid with love”***

There are yet many other teachings that could be contemplated in the life – so rich in details – of St. Lutgardis. However, there is but one aspect that is necessary for the imitation of all Christians: the docility with which she allowed herself to be transformed by the power of divine love.

The God of infinite goodness pours out torrents of affection on every baptized person at every moment. For this love to be effective, however, it must, as the mellifluous Founder of Lutgardis taught, “return to its origin, go back to its beginning and return to

*God pours out torrents of affection on each of us; let us imitate the docility of Lutgardis in being transformed by the power of divine love!*



Reproduction

“Christ Appears to St. Lutgardis”, by Gaspar de Crayer - Convent of the Black Augustinian Nuns, Antwerp (Belgium)

its source, from which it will always draw new waters to flow unceasingly.”<sup>5</sup> This will always be the secret of all the happiness and holiness of the just.

Let us ask the Cistercian Saint that, from the splendid throne of glory where she is, she obtain for us from the Sacred Heart of Jesus the grace to love Him above all things and to the very limits of our being! ✧

<sup>1</sup> The dialogues transcribed in this article are taken from the work: MERTON, Thomas. *O que são estas chagas? A vida da mística cisterciense Santa Lutgarda de Aywières*. Campinas: Ecclesiae, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, p.83.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p.205.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, p.206.

<sup>5</sup> ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. Sermones sobre el Cantar de los Cantares. Sermón 83, n.4. In: *Obras Completas*. Madrid: BAC, 1987, v.V, p.1030.

# Remains that Proclaim the Victory of Faith

A precious heritage was won with suffering and blood in the early times of the Church: veneration of the relics of the Saints, a devotion that will endure throughout the centuries.



✦ Sr. Fernanda Cordeiro, EP

**L**eafing through the pages of the *Golden Legend*, we find facts from the lives of the Saints which, although they may lack historical proof, help us to appreciate the lives of the Blessed in their marvellous aspect, as can be noted in the episode narrated in these lines, describing the early origins of one of the most deeply-rooted Catholic devotions.

## ***Two pillars of the Church, united until martyrdom***

“Peace be with you, foundation of the churches, shepherd of the sheep and lambs of Christ!” Hearing these words at such a stirring moment, St. Peter, in turn, addressed his fraternal farewell to the Apostle of the Gentiles: “Go in peace, preacher of good morals, mediator and guide of the salvation of the just.”<sup>1</sup> They had together fought the last battle in the preaching of the Gospel against the perfidious magician Simon, and now, after the triumph of orthodoxy, they faced the same glorious end: martyrdom, which would take place on the same day and hour, in Rome, by order of the Emperor Nero.

Crucifixion was reserved for the Apostle who loved the most. His disciples, amid their tears, had the consolation of seeing Angels surrounding the cross from which he had

been hung upside down. Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to the Head of the Church and handed him a book, in which St. Peter read the following words: “It is You, Lord, I wished to imitate, but without presuming to be crucified upright, for always upright, splendid and sublime are You, whereas we are children of the first man, whose head is buried in the earth [...]. You, Lord, are everything for me, [...] there is nothing besides You.”<sup>2</sup> And, commending all the faithful to God, he surrendered his spirit.

The intrepid St. Paul was beheaded, for he was a Roman citizen. At the moment of execution, from his lips flowed the name he had fearlessly preached and for which he had lovingly suffered untold torments: Jesus Christ! Indeed, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34), especially in the last moments of life. When his venerable head was detached from his body, it struck the ground three times, and in each place a fountain miraculously sprang up.

After the martyrdom of these two pillars of Christianity had been consummated, a woman named Lemobia, who was present at St. Paul’s death, beheld a vision of the two Apostles wearing dazzling clothes and crowns of light on their heads.<sup>3</sup> Those two fiery souls were already in heavenly glory, receiving the portion “which the

Lord, the righteous Judge” (2 Tm 4:8) had reserved for them!

Meanwhile, however, here on earth their lifeless bodies would serve as the occasion for a beautiful act of heroism.

## ***Beheaded in defence of the holy relics***

It is said that on that very night, while silence reigned on the Roman streets, two women of the nobility took advantage of the circumstance to bury the bodies of these giants of the Faith who had offered their holocaust. Basilissa and Anastasia, who had been converted by the preaching and apostolate of both, did not hesitate to risk their lives in homage and gratitude to their teachers.

However, by providential design, the two were discovered and brought to Nero’s tribunal in order to reveal the whereabouts of the bodies, so that they could be burned.

Sustained by divine grace, neither of them could be brought to confess the hiding place of the holy corpses. The authorities, seized with fury at the heroic resistance of the two women, decided to torture them: they cut out their tongues and severed their arms and feet. Nevertheless, none of this was able to shake their fidelity! Both were finally beheaded by the iniquitous tribunal.

## Precious heritage of the first Christians

The martyrdom of Sts. Basilissa and Anastasia on account of their defence of the mortal remains of those most worthy representatives of Christ Jesus reveals the strong devotion to relics of the earliest Christians.

The record of the death of St. Polycarp, disciple of St. John the Evangelist, recounts that the faithful gathered up the venerable bishop's bones, like precious gems, and buried them.<sup>4</sup> Another account describes the holocaust of St. Ignatius of Antioch in the Coliseum, after which his followers collected his holy remains to be "deposited in the Church as a priceless treasure."<sup>5</sup>

The cult of relics – a term originating from the Latin *relinquere*, to remain, and which in a religious sense refers to the remains of the bodies of the Saints or of objects used by them – continued throughout the history of the Church. In the catacombs, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated over the tombs of the martyrs; cathedrals were built to be great reliquaries, as it were. Sainte-Chapelle, for example, was built to enshrine the crown of thorns of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, relics were kept not only in buildings. It was the custom among Catholic knights to have them inlaid into the hilts of their swords to strengthen them in battle. Roland, Charlemagne's nephew and one of his peers, carried a piece of

Our Lady's garment and a tooth of St. Peter in his sword.<sup>6</sup>

For the medieval faithful in general, militant in daily life, relics were instruments of grace and miracles. Accordingly, they spared no effort in making pilgrimages to visit of the bodies of the Blessed. And so this pious devotion became firmly established in souls, and took on new vigour in the troubled 16th century.

### Condemnation of the heresy

At that time, the Protestant reformers spread their poison by preaching a kind of "invisible Church" and rejecting elements of mediation in the relationship between man and God. Outraged by the cult of human remains, which they impiously deemed idolatry, they burned several incorrupt bodies preserved in Europe.

The abomination reached such a pitch that, on invading the city of Rome, an antipapist army burned and destroyed countless relics and dese-

crated others of great value to Christendom: the head of St. Andrew was thrown to the ground; the cloth with which Veronica wiped the Holy Face of the Redeemer was offered for sale in an inn; the lance that pierced the side of the Divine Saviour was sarcastically carried in a profane parade.<sup>7</sup>

In the face of these and many other heresies and manifestations of hatred, the Church reacted by holding the Council of Trent, which reinforced that the veneration of the mortal remains of the Saints is a means whereby God bestows many benefits upon men, and condemned all those who contradict this truth and deny relics their due honour.<sup>8</sup>

### We have intercessors in eternity!

The pragmatism of the present day unfortunately obscures the intelligence, weakens the will and unbalances sensitivity towards the things of Heaven, leading man to relegate the cult of relics to a secondary plane. Yet we have no idea how much the Blessed are, so to speak, "leaning over the parapet" of Heaven, at the disposition of earthly supplicants, desirous of helping them in their needs and leading them to union with God.

Let us, then, have recourse to the Saints; they are our brothers! And if on earth they fulfilled to a heroic degree the divine commandment to love their neighbour as themselves, how much more will they not strive for our good, now that they are enjoying eternal happiness! ✧



### The heroic death of the two martyrs reveals the devotion to relics among the early Christians

Martyrdom of Sts. Basilissa and Anastasia, illumination from the Menologion of Basil II - Vatican Library

<sup>1</sup> BLESSED JACOBUS DE VORAGINE. *Legenda aurea. Vidas de Santos*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003, p.506.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, p.507.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, p.517.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. RUIZ BUENO, Daniel (Ed.). *Actas de los mártires*. 5.ed. Madrid: BAC, 2003, p.277.

<sup>5</sup> RUINART, Teodorico. *Las verdaderas actas de los mártires*. Madrid: Joachin Ibarra, 1776, t.I, p.21.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. JONIN, Pierre (Ed.). *A canção de Rolando*. São Pa-

ulo: Martins Fontes, 2006, p.83.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. HIBBERT, Christopher. *Rome: the biography of a city*. London: Penguin, 1985, p.158.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. DH 1822.

## *Aided by a Mother*

Like children who abandon themselves to the care of their mothers, expecting protection and support, Dona Lucilia wants us to trust in her help, certain that she hastens to the aid of those who come to her with their needs.



↳ **Elizabete Fátima Astorino**

**W**e sometimes tend to think that, in order to be answered in prayer, we must formulate long and elaborate requests. However, the Saviour's teaching is quite different: "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him" (Mt 6:7-8).

The accounts transcribed here confirm this precious lesson of the Divine Master. As a mother who intercedes with solicitude before the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Dona Lucilia does not need grandiloquent supplications. Rather, she wants us to trust in her help like children who abandon themselves to her maternal care, in the expectation of receiving protection and support, certain that she always hastens to the aid of those who come to her with their needs.

***"Dona Lucilia filled our wallet!"***

Liliana Rojas and her husband, José Martín Ordinola, who reside in the city of Trujillo, Peru, send us an account of a grace they received through

the intercession of Dona Lucilia at a time of great need.

Liliana learned about the Heralds of the Gospel in the year 2021, through the course of consecration to Our Lady. From then on, she followed the videos posted on the Internet, through which she came to know the story of Dona Lucilia. She enjoyed following the narration of her life: "I heard about her miracles, about her great intercession; every time I watched the program I was surprised by her goodness and intercession." Nevertheless,

she wondered: "Is it true? Is she really such a 'miracle worker'?"

Thus, with a mixture of curiosity and admiration, Liliana grew in her devotion to Dona Lucilia: "I received a picture of her, had it printed and put it in a frame. I always turn to her and trust in her great love to help me. Even in small difficulties she helps me; I look at her and she reassures me. In my moments of dread and fear, I picture her smile – if I am far from her photo – and she brings me calm and peace."

*Faced with the impossibility of financing the surgery, Liliana knew they would receive help: "Ask her insistently and she will do it!"*

Liliana Rojas and her husband, José Martín, pose with a picture of Dona Lucilia



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During the pandemic, her husband was diagnosed with a tumour on his pituitary gland. After numerous examinations and medical consultations, they were told that surgery would be necessary to remove it. However, the cost of the procedure far exceeded the couple's means: thirty thousand Peruvian soles – close to eight thousand US dollars – were needed to pay for it... How could they come up with such an amount?

Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, José Martín's work as a lawyer was scarce and his income was low. However, Liliana's faith brought hope to the situation when she recounted to her husband the graces that Dona Lucilia grants to her devotees, even in financial difficulties like the one they were facing: "My husband, a little incredulous, told me laughing and opening his wallet: 'Ask her to fill my wallet!' And I answered him: 'Ask her insistently and she will do it!'"

Three days after that remarkable conversation, José Martín received notification that he had to pick up, in a neighbouring town, the earnings from a client's labour case. His legal fees amounted to thirty thousand soles, the exact amount needed for the surgery! Liliana recounts: "It was a great joy when my husband came home and showed me the bundle of notes, saying: 'Look! Here is the exact amount needed for my surgery.' I answered him: 'You see, our *mãezinha* [little mother – trans.] Lucilia gave it to you. She is miraculous, she is wonderful!"

In April 2022, José Martín had a successful operation. Liliana saw her confidence rewarded and ends her narrative with filial gratitude: "Thank you, *mãezinha* Lucilia!"

### **When human resources fail...**

We have also received reports coming from Portugal. Isabel de Jesus Fonseca, from Alhos Vedros, tells us about a favour obtained through the intercession of this kind mother.



Isabel Fonseca beside her repaired car

*After unsuccessfully trying to get her car back, Isabel appealed to the intercession of Dona Lucilia, promising to publish her testimony*

In August 2022, Isabel had a minor car accident and, to fix the damage, she chose an accredited auto repair shop, because it had more quality service guarantees. However, due to the fighting in Ukraine, the material needed for the repair was then in short supply in the country.

With real apprehension, she watched three months go by without any news about the date of the vehicle's return. Needing it, she phoned the dealership and was told that one headlight was still needed. Just one headlight! Resigned, Isabel let some more time pass. After another month, she inquired again and everything was at the same point,

with no prospect of when the work would be completed.

She recounts: "I decided to appeal to the intercession of Dona Lucilia, and began to pray to her asking for the car to be returned to me quickly. I decided to go to the garage in person, and got no more information than I already had; so I started looking for a headlight on several websites. It was difficult. They were all sold out! Continuing to pray to her, I promised then that I would publish this grace as soon as the car was delivered to me."

And she did not have to wait long: giving her an unusual precedence over other customers, and despite the fact that the parts had been arriving piecemeal from the factory, the dealership delivered the repaired vehicle to her in fifteen days. Dona Lucilia shortened the delay in a motherly way. "I consider this as a great favour from her, a sign of her affection for me!" writes Isabel thankfully.

### **The day I am cured...**

From Paraguay writes Maria del Carmen Fretes, affectionately known as Doña Maia, describing how she was helped by Dona Lucilia: "In October 2022, I suddenly developed a very high fever. I had to go to the hospital because the fever did not subside. After the initial tests, the doctors decided to admit me, because the results were not very encouraging. More tests followed over five days, after which they told me that some very strange bacteria had entered my body and, as if that were not enough, they detected a spot on my right lung."

After seven days in hospital, Doña Maia was discharged, but she had to take high doses of medication and follow up with a doctor about the aforementioned spot. A few days later, the appearance of another type of bacteria obliged her to return to the hospital.

In December, a tomography scan revealed that the spot, far from disappearing, had increased. The doctor

attending to her then indicated that it would be necessary to perform an incision in the lung. As it was not possible to have such an intervention there in Paraguay, Doña Maia consulted a specialist in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, to whom she sent the results of all her examinations. She continues: “The doctor recommended that I travel urgently to São Paulo to undergo a lobectomy as soon as possible, as he was talking about a pulmonary neoplasm.”

The day before her trip, Doña Maia visited the house of the Heralds of the Gospel in Asunción, where she received sacramental assistance from a priest of the institution to help her through the difficult phase that was beginning. The priest comforted her by saying that God always has the last word, and gave her a prayer card of Doña Lucilia with a prayer on the back. Dona Maia recounts: “Before saying goodbye, he gave me a picture of a lady, whose tomb in São Paulo – he told me – I should visit on the day the doctor certified that I was cured.”

Doña Maia was not yet acquainted with the maternal protection of Dona Lucilia, but from that day on she entrusted her health and her treatment to the care of this kind lady and every evening she recited the prayer printed on the back of the photograph.

### ***The diagnosis is reversed***

On January 23, she started a series of preparatory exams for the lung incision at Albert Einstein Hospital, in São Paulo. She recounts: “From the beginning I felt a special strength that brought me great calm and tranquil-



Reproduction

Doña Maia at Dona Lucilia's tomb at Consolation Cemetary in São Paulo

*After her lung incision was cancelled, Doña Maia joyfully decided to go to Dona Lucilia's tomb the following day to thank her*

lity during the tests; I mentioned this to my husband, because under normal circumstances it would not have been easy for me to go through them.”

When brought into the operating room on the 26th, Doña Maia was praying nonstop. At that moment, the surgeon came in and said that the medical team had decided to take another tomography, to clarify a doubt about the spot in the lung, because it seemed that it had diminished. Doña Maia writes: “At first I was startled and did not want to have any illusions. I just prayed and

prayed and remembered the conversation with the priest. The nurse brought my husband into the consulting room and a few minutes later the doctor returned to give me the news that the procedure was cancelled because the spot had reduced to less than half its former size and the peripheral nodules had dissolved.”

Full of joy, Doña Maia closes her account with words of gratitude: “That same day I contacted the Herald priest to tell him everything that had happened, and to

say that I wanted to visit Dona Lucilia's tomb the next day. Another surprise: the priest was in São Paulo and was also planning to go to the cemetery! Thus, on Friday January 27, I was able to visit the grave and thank her for this miracle.”

### ***A series of trials and illnesses***

Equally touching is the testimony sent to us by Mrs. Patricia Carolina Ríos Furlotti, also from Paraguay, in the sincere hope that her story may serve to increase the faith of others in the maternal intercession of Dona Lucilia.

Married to Marcos Rafael for 16 years, she has had no children and suffers from several illnesses that began shortly after their marriage and have only worsened over time. Both are fervent collaborators of the Heralds of the Gospel, are familiar with the devotion to Dona Lucilia and have entrusted themselves to her in various difficulties, and continually receive her favours and protection. However, during one of the greatest trials they have ever passed through, her supernatural

intervention became more palpable for both of them.

Patricia writes: “In 2019 I was constantly getting sick and underwent several tests with a gynaecologist, a nutritionist, an orthomolecular doctor, a gastroenterologist and an endocrinologist. The gynaecologist diagnosed me with endometriosis which was affecting the ovaries, causing endometriomas; the gastroenterologist diagnosed gastritis and oesophagitis; and the nutritionist detected intolerance to twenty principal foods.”

Wishing to avoid the treatment suggested by the gynaecologist, since it would forever rob her of the possibility of becoming a mother, Patricia chose to wait for a miracle, treating herself only with vitamins and minerals, besides changing her diet. Over time, the progression of the endometriosis seemed to have slowed, but there continued to be terrible pain and various symptoms that made it impossible for her to carry out her normal activities. In November 2022, feeling very unwell and almost unable to walk due to the pain, she consulted a specialist, who ordered an MRI scan.

Patricia recounts: “Immediately after checking the results, the doctor told me that both ovaries, which already had cysts, had increased considerably in size, especially one of them. A uterine myoma had also appeared, causing pain and taking up space in the uterus. Because of the pain, I asked him to please operate on me, because I couldn’t continue any longer on medication alone.”

**“I will not operate on you!”**

In this situation of suffering, perplexity and trials, the priest responsible for the Herald Cooperators in Paraguay invited Patricia to join the choir that was being formed. She replied that she would love to participate, but... it depended on an improvement in her precarious state of health. She continues:

“Then the priest, very charitably and with complete faith and confidence, recommended that I turn to Dona Lucilia and make a ‘contract’ with her, so that she would cure me and I could participate in the apostolic activities.”

Encouraged by this advice, Patricia and her family began to pray the irresistible *Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, taking Dona Lucilia as intercessor, since she had shown so much devotion to Him during her life. Besides reciting this prayer, Patricia kept with her a small pouch with petals taken from the tomb of Dona Lucilia and a memento of her.

*Patricia made a “contract” with Dona Lucilia, declaring that if she were cured, she would participate in the apostolic activities*

Thus prepared, she went to the doctor’s office the day before the surgery, to undergo a prior examination. To her surprise, the doctor declared to her after analysing the result of the examination: “I am not going to operate on you!” Patricia recalls: “I asked him calmly: ‘Why, doctor?’ He answered: ‘That big cyst has disappeared.’ I asked him: ‘And the other one, doctor?’ He replied: ‘It has also disappeared!’ And he added: ‘Why would I operate on you if there is nothing there?’”

Patricia then declared, “Ah! I happen to have a Saint named Dona Lucilia!” The doctor retorted, in a joking tone, “Well that lady is not much to my liking, for she takes away all my work!”

With an exclamation of joy and gratitude, Patricia concludes her account: “That day was Saturday, January 21, 2023. Day 21, that is, the day of the month when Dona Lucilia left for eternity. It is as if it were her signature! Blessed be God in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, in his Angels and Saints, and especially in his beloved daughter Dona Lucilia!” ✧



Mrs. Patricia Furlotti and her husband, Marcos Rafael

Reproduction



## Honouring the Victory of the Cross

Summit and centre of the Liturgical Year, the celebrations of the Pascal Triduum are an occasion of special graces for the faithful who participate in them.

At the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the Church gives thanks for the institution of the Eucharist and the Priesthood, manifested with special solemnity in the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament (photo 2) to the Repository (photo 1). However, a note of sorrow is felt at the end of the ceremony with the stripping of the altar (photo 3), which evokes the beginning of the Saviour's sufferings. The prostration of the priest (photo 4) opens the Good Friday Commemoration of the Lord's Passion, culminating with the Adoration of the Holy Cross (photos 5 and 6), imbued with the redeeming Blood. Nothing compares, however, to the Church's joy in celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus in the Easter Vigil (photo 14). The ceremony begins with the blessing of the new fire (photo 11) and the procession with the paschal candle (photos 12 and 13), a symbol of Christ, the Light that overcomes the darkness of sin. This occasion is particularly suitable for

the Baptism of catechumens (photo 10). And the joys of Easter Sunday also include the chocolate eggs given out to the children (photo 15).

These pages offer a sampling of the ceremonies carried out by the Heralds of the Gospel from April 6 to 9, at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary in Caieiras, and at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Cotia, both in Brazil; the Monastery of Jesus and Mary Joseph, in Madrid, Spain; the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, in Tocancipá, Colombia; the Church of the Mother of Good Counsel, in Ypacaraí, Paraguay; at Our Lady of Fatima Oratory and at St. Agnes Chapel, Mairiporã, Brazil; in the St. Joseph Community of Matola-Gare, in Matola, Mozambique; and at the House of the Heralds in Guimarães, Portugal.

Also noteworthy was the processional Stations of the Cross at the house of the Heralds in Guatemala (photo 7), as well as the processions with the recumbent Christ at the Royal Discalced Convent in Madrid (photo 8), and on the streets surrounding Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, in Medellín, Colombia (photo 9).





Leandro Sousa



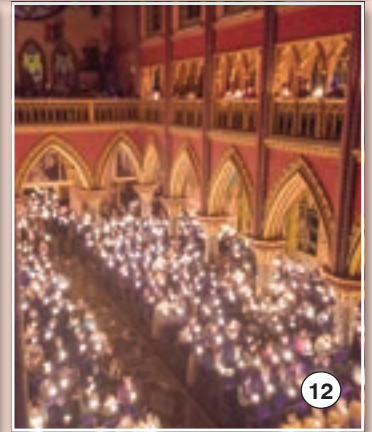
Jesse Arce

Roberto Salas



Ivano G.

Silvestre Marcos



Emerson Junior

Xavier Jacob



José Eduardo Valente



Photos: Eduardo Injoque



**Brazil** – At the invitation of the Franciscan Brothers of the Providence of God, the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary visited, in March and April, the premises of the St. Francis University Hospital, in the municipality of Bragança Paulista, and the Holy Houses of Mercy in the cities of Aparecida and Guaratinguetá. To the sound of beautiful hymns sung by the young heralds, the Mother of God brought comfort and hope to both staff and patients.



Photos: Dismery Tineo



**Dominican Republic** – The St. Francis of Assisi Nursing Home, run by the Little Sisters of the Abandoned Elderly in the city of Santo Domingo, was also visited by the Pilgrim Statue. There was a crowning of the Blessed Virgin followed by moments of prayer.



Photos: Aida de Mérida



**Guatemala** – Brim-full of innocent joy, the children of the nursery school run by Our Lady of the Way Church in Guatemala City eagerly welcomed the Pilgrim Statue on March 23. Accompanied by teachers and assistants, they brought their youthful petitions to Mary Most Holy and received rosaries, holy cards and goodies as souvenirs of the occasion.

## 18<sup>th</sup> National Shrine Apostolate Encounter

Ten thousand people participated in the 18th National Shrine Apostolate Encounter, held on April 22 at the Fatima Shrine in Portugal. The programme began with the entrance procession and crowning of the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, followed by Holy Mass celebrated by Most Rev. Francisco José Villas-Boas Senra de Faria Coelho, Archbishop of Évora, in the Basilica of

the Blessed Trinity. “I see in the Heralds of the Gospel an adamantine and valiant fidelity of encounter with the Lord in prayer, in faithfulness to the Church and therefore an echo of the Gospel that we heard today”, said the prelate during the homily. After the celebration, there was a period of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the recitation of the Rosary and a procession to the Little Chapel of Apparitions.



Photos: Telmo Silva



Photos: KLP, El Salvador

**El Salvador** – In order to raise the necessary funds for the construction of the new church of the Heralds in El Salvador, on April 18, more than five hundred people gathered for a charity dinner in San Salvador. During this occasion, Bishop Luigi Roberto Cona, Apostolic Nuncio to El Salvador, crowned the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Those present were also able to enjoy a musical concert and watch a video about the progress of the construction.



## **Increase in Baptisms during Easter Vigil**

Holy Week celebrations brought new life to the universal Church, with thousands of Baptisms taking place during the Easter Vigil.

In the United States alone, over four thousand catechumens received the Sacraments of Christian initiation. The Archdiocese of Atlanta was the most blessed, with 1,831 new members, followed by the Archdiocese of Washington, with 1,000 Baptisms; Baltimore, with 500; and New Orleans, with approximately 300. It should be noted that the Eucharist was a determining factor in many of these conversions.

In Europe, the French Bishops' Conference reported that 5,463 adults were baptized in its territory – a 28% increase over last year – and pointed to the remarkable number of young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who converted to the Catholic Faith.

## **Austrians want crosses in public places**

A recent poll conducted at the request of the news magazine *Profil*, revealed that a majority of Austrians – 67% of the population – are in favour of keeping crosses in public places, such as schools and hospitals, and keeping Easter celebrations in nurseries and schools.

Of the respondents, 62% justify their choice for keeping Easter celebrations because it is a commemoration with heightened Christian con-

tent that are part of the Austrian tradition, while 30% consider them only as enjoyable festivities for children. However, two thirds of the population believe that Easter and Christmas celebrations tend to diminish or disappear altogether in schools out of deference to persons of other beliefs.

## **“Night of Confessionals”**

More than two hundred churches in Poland have joined the campaign *The Night of Confessionals*, an occasion that allows the faithful to have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance at night in order to prepare themselves for the Easter solemnities. The initiative, which has been running for thirteen years, aims to meet the needs of Catholics who are busier during the day.

This year the faithful had a special webpage and an app that allowed them to find out which churches offered night Confessions and book a time, as well as download prayers and even an examination of conscience to guide them in their preparation.



Antonio Lujane

## **Devotion or tourism at Santiago de Compostela?**

Moved by faith, over seventy thousand people walked the historic route of Santiago de Compostela in the year 2022. The figure was obtained in a survey conducted by the Association of Municipalities of the *Camino de Santiago*, which revealed that at least 20% of the hikers covered the route in the spirit of pilgrimage.

With the aim of increasing the religious motivation for this walk,

the Spanish bishops have been implementing new forms of apostolate, such as Christian Welcome Centres along the *Camino de Santiago*, as well as an increased use of Catholic symbols, including crosses and images of the Apostle, along the route. Thus, pilgrims are given the opportunity to revive their faith – something to which the Way already predisposes them, by reason of its very historical and spiritual force.

## **Catholics build chapel in Vietnam**

After decades of perseverance, despite government opposition, a small community of Catholic believers has erected its own chapel near Son Thinh in the Vãn Chấn district of Yên Bái, northwest Vietnam.

The three-hundred-square-metre chapel, still lacking doors and windows, is the first triumph of the community, which since the 1980s has struggled to keep the faith alive amid hostility from the civil authority and the scarce sacramental assistance in the region.

## **First Mass after twenty years of fundamentalist rule**

The Monastery of St. Michael in Mosul, Iraq once again had the Holy Sacrifice of the altar celebrated within its walls in March. Six years after the liberation of the city, and within a landscape still devastated by twenty years of confrontations in the country, the Metropolitan Archdiocese of the Chaldean rite, Archbishop Najib Mikhael Moussa, OP, presided over Mass at the monastery, concelebrated by the Bishop of Alqosh, Most Rev. Paul Thabet Habib Yousif Al Mekko. During the Islamic State invasion, the site was deliberately looted and vandalized, as well as suffering numerous bombings, as it was used by the jihadists as a refuge and weapons depot.

For his part, the Syriac Archdiocese of Mosul, Bishop Benedict

# Revival of the Faith in Berlin

Known as the “atheist capital of Europe,” Berlin is now the scene of innovative evangelization efforts, which may represent a genuine response of Providence to the growing dechristianization of the continent.

The Catholics of St. Clement’s Parish, for example, located two kilometres from the Bundestag, bought the church in 2006, when the Archdiocese of Berlin was going through a serious financial crisis and had to sell it. They invited Vincentian priests from India to come there and give them sacramental assistance. Since then the church – perhaps the only one in Berlin – has held perpetual Eucharistic Adoration, twenty-four hours a day, all week long, with large numbers of the faithful attending.



Eucharistic Adoration  
in St. Clement’s Parish, Berlin

Other projects, such as those led by the former head of international relations at Lufthansa, Jan Philipp Göetz, include initiatives for doctrinal formation through a philosophy academy and a society for entrepreneurs. There are also Catholic groups that combine Marian devotion with the challenges presented by new digital technologies, and promote the recitation of the Rosary in the city streets.

According to a Berlin priest, for the new evangelizers in a Germany that has forgotten Christianity, it is increasingly clear that “those faithful to Christ are surrounded by others who say we must abandon what Jesus taught us and what we have done for two thousand years, and to update it for the 21st century”; but “in these days it is our task to go to the foot of the Cross and stay with Jesus and Mary.”

Younan Mubarak Hano, had the joy of celebrating, in April, the First Holy Communion Mass for one hundred and fifteen children in the Church of St. John the Baptist, located in the Iraqi city of Qaraqosh, which was also occupied by the Islamic State between the years 2014 and 2016. During this period, the fundamentalists burned and desecrated several local

churches, and Christians who could not flee were tortured and murdered.

## *Italian teacher penalized for praying with pupils*

In mid-March, a primary school teacher was punished with twenty days’ suspension and a reduction in salary for praying part of the Rosary with the pupils of a public school

in the town of San Vero Milis, Sardinia.

The educator, Marisa Francescangeli, had made a rosary-shaped bracelet with the children a few days before Christmas, and invited them to pray. The complaints of some parents prompted disciplinary measures imposed by the school board, which led to polemical debates in the Italian media.

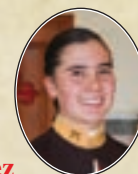
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## Can We Be of Any Use?

Thinking over everything that had happened, Manuela sat down on a garden bench and began to cry. Just then, the autumn wind began to blow the leaves from the trees...



✦ Valery Dayan López

**I**t was a Saturday afternoon in autumn. The children were waiting for catechism class to begin. But to their surprise, instead of the kind nun who usually taught them, another sister entered the room:

“Attention, children: Sr. Laura could not come today. She has a bad cold and

needs to rest. Everyone should use this time to work on their exercises.”

The pupils were saddened with this news, partly because they felt pity for their beloved teacher, but also because they wanted to learn more about the subject of the Real Presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, in preparation for the great day of First Communion.

As the minutes ticked by, some of the students began to finish their assignments before the others. One of them was Manuela, a girl outstanding for her innocence and generosity. She wanted to use the remaining time to help her classmates:

“Does anyone need help?” she asked.

However, no one answered. . .

She got up and went from desk to desk, quietly offering her assistance, but she received only negative responses.

Manuela was not discouraged: she was determined to do some good deed! As there was still an hour and a half left before home time, she received permission to walk about the convent to see if she could be of use to anyone.

The first idea that came to mind was to spend some time with Sr.

Laura, and just then, by happy chance, she came upon the sister infirmarian:

“Our catechism teacher is sick; may I go and take care of her or at least keep her company? She might be feeling lonely.”

The nun saw the girl’s excellent intentions, but she had to explain:

“That is a very beautiful wish! I know how pleased Sr. Laura would be. But I cannot allow you to be close to her, because you could get sick too. May the Holy Virgin reward you! If you would like to write a message for her, I will gladly pass it along.”

Accepting the nun’s words, Manuela wrote an affectionate note and then continued to search for someone who needed help.

She then found the sister in charge of sewing. Seeing the nun embroidering a beautiful altar cloth, she happily volunteered:

“Good afternoon, Sister! Can I help you in any way?”

“Oh, bless you, my child! I only have one needle... Next time I will bring enough supplies for you to sew with me, would you like that?”

Manuela agreed, and stood for a while, watching the skilful sister work. Then said good-bye and continued on



Seeing a piece of paper on the ground, she picked it up. It was a photograph of St. Therese with a quote!

her way. Descending a flight of stairs, she crossed paths with the repair man in charge of general maintenance. He was coming up the stairs carrying a toolbox in one hand and a ladder in the other. Without a second thought, she said eagerly:

“Oh, let me help you!”

However, the man only muttered crossly:

“No, no, don’t disturb me, little girl. You are not strong enough to carry this equipment. You will only get in the way.”

But Manuela replied:

“Please just let me carry your toolbox to the top of the stairs. Then I promise to leave you alone.”

With a sigh, he reluctantly handed it to her. Poor Manuela! She did not see that the latch was a little loose, and when she seized the handle, the box opened and all the tools poured out and tumbled down the stairs. Crosser than ever, the repair man shouted:

“I knew it! Didn’t I tell you that you would only get in the way? Go and play outside!”

Trembling, Manuela took his advice and fled to the garden.

A few minutes later, she spotted the gardener planting flowers. This time, she was certain that she had finally found the place where she could be truly helpful. She hurried to the flower bed and asked:

“May I help you to plant these pretty flowers?”

“Well, first of all, you’re not dressed for the job. Gardening requires suitable clothing. Secondly, it is not as easy as you think: You have to have a real feel for the earth, and an experienced hand with plants. You don’t really know anything about gardening, do you?”

Disappointed once more, Manuela decided to return to the classroom and wait for end of the lesson... But as she made her way back, she thought over everything that had happened that afternoon, and was

suddenly overcome with sadness. She sat down on a bench and could not hold back the tears that streamed down her face.

As she cried, the autumn wind suddenly picked up and snatched the coloured leaves from the trees in the garden, showering them down like snowflakes, all lit with the golden light of the afternoon sun. Watching the scene, Manuela began to forget her sorrow. Then she noticed a little piece of paper that swirled close to her and landed among the leaves.

“I will never manage to rake all these leaves away, but I can at least remove that piece of paper, which does not belong in the garden,” she thought. Picking it up, she saw it was a photograph of Saint Therese, under which was printed the following quote: “Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you – for you alone?”

“Jesus is in the tabernacle...”, reflected Manuela. “Why didn’t I think of that? Here I am preparing for my First Holy Communion and the idea of visiting Him did not even cross my mind!” She immediately arose and, drying her tears, she went to the convent chapel.

It was a small but welcoming chapel, filled with an atmosphere of peace and recollection. She knelt down and prayed in silence, bringing all of her petitions to the foot of the altar. After a time, she sat on the pew and lowered her head, looking again at the photo of St. Therese, who had literally floated down from heaven to guide her to the Blessed Sacrament. Over and over again she read those words that had touched her so deeply. Then a soft noise interrupted her musings. Looking up to where the sound had come from, she saw the tabernacle door open! “How strange... it wasn’t like that when I arrived”, she thought. Then she noticed the presence of someone beside her. She turned and...

“Manuela, I was waiting for you.”

It was Jesus, who opened His arms and drew her close to his Divine Heart!

“You were waiting for me?”

“Yes, my child. If you were the only sinner in the world, I would have become man just to redeem you. Nor would I have stopped there: I would have hidden myself under the appearance of bread and wine, to nourish you and be with you.”

“Can I be of any use to You, Lord?”

“Yes. Give me your love; it will never be useless to Me. On the contrary, it will please Me immensely!”

Manuela received another embrace from Our Lord and, the next instant, the vision disappeared. But that grace had marked her to the depths of her soul!

From then on, she would never miss an opportunity to visit the Blessed Sacrament, because she remembered that Christ would have come to earth if only to save her, and that we will always be useful to Him, as long as we give Him our heart, returning the love He has given us. ✧



Illustrations: Elizabeth Bonyun

**For God, we will always be useful, as long as we return the love He has given us**

# THE SAINTS OF EACH DAY

1. **St. Justin**, martyr (†c. 165 Rome).

**St. Simeon of Syracuse**, hermit (†1035). After leading a hermitical life in Bethlehem and Mount Sinai, he ended his days in reclusion at the tower of the Black Gate in Trier, Germany.

2. **Sts. Marcellinus and Peter**, martyrs (†304 Rome).

**St. Blandina**, martyr (†177). Beheaded in Lyon, France, at the time of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, after having suffered many tortments.

3. **St. Charles Lwanga and twelve companions**, martyrs (†1886 Kampala - Uganda).

**St. John Grande**, religious (†1600). Religious of the Order of Hospitallers, he died after contracting the plague while treating the sick in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain.

4. **Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.**

**Blessed Francis Pianzola**, priest (†1943). Priest of the Diocese of Vigevano, Italy, he founded the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate, Queen of Peace.

5. **St. Boniface**, bishop and martyr (†754 Dokkum - Holland).

**St. Cyriacus - Church of the Martyrs, Malaga (Spain)**



**St. Illidius of Auvergne**, bishop (†384). Prelate of Clermont-Ferrand, France. Called to Trier, Germany, by Emperor Maximus to free his daughter from an unclean spirit, he died on the return journey.

6. **St. Norbert**, bishop (†1134 Magdeburg - Germany).

**Blessed Lorenzo de Mascullis of Villamagna**, priest (†1535). Franciscan priest who attracted crowds with his preaching, producing countless conversions. He died in Ortona, Italy.

7. **Blessed Marie Therese Soubiran de La Louvière**, virgin (†1889). She founded the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians in Toulouse, France. Unjustly expelled from the institute, she and spent the rest of her life in deep humility.

8. **St. Ephrem**, deacon and Doctor of the Church (†378 Edessa - Turkey).

**Blessed John Davy**, deacon and martyr (†1537). English Carthusian monk who, for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, suffered terrible torture and starved to death in prison during the reign of Henry VIII.

9. **St. Ephrem**, deacon and Doctor of the Church (†373).

**Blessed Anna Maria Taigi**, wife and mother (†1837). A Trinitarian tertiary, she patiently bore her husband's violent temperament. She possessed a singular gift of

wisdom, discernment of spirits and prophecy.

10. **Blessed Henry of Bolzano**, layman (†1315). An uneducated carpenter, he gave all he had to the poor. Although suffering from ill health, he shared the meagre alms he begged with those in greater need.

11. **Solemnity of the Most Precious Body and Blood of Christ.**

**St. Barnabas**, Apostle.

**St. Aleide**, virgin (†1250). Cistercian nun from the monastery of La Chambre, near Brussels. At age twenty-two she contracted leprosy, becoming paralyzed and blind. She offered her sufferings for the souls in purgatory.

12. **St. Leo III**, Pope (†816). He conferred the crown of the Holy Empire on Charlemagne, King of the Franks, and fought to defend the true doctrine of the divine dignity of the Son of God.

13. **St. Anthony of Padua**, priest and Doctor of the Church (†1231 Padua - Italy).

**Blessed Gerard**, monk (†1138). Brother of St. Bernard and a Cistercian together with him in Clairvaux, France. He shone for his intelligence and spiritual discernment, despite his little culture.

14. **St. Fortunatus of Naples**, bishop (†4<sup>th</sup> century). He preserved his diocese from the Arian heresy by proclaiming the divinity of Jesus Christ.

15. **St. Benilde**, martyr (†853). He suffered martyrdom after having



publicly confessing the divinity of Jesus Christ during the time of Islamic rule in Spain.

## 16. Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

**Blessed Maria Teresa Scherer**, virgin (†1888). First Superior or General of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, founded in Ingenbohl, Switzerland, to assist the sick, the poor and the needy.

## 17. The Immaculate Heart of Mary.

**Blessed Peter Gambacorta**, religious (†1435). He founded the Order of Hermits of St. Jerome in Montebello, Italy, whose first religious were former thieves whom he had converted.

## 18. 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.

**Sts. Cyriacus and Paula**, martyrs (†4<sup>th</sup> century). Stoned in Africa during the persecution of Emperor Diocletian.

## 19. St. Romuald, abbot (†1027 Marcas - Italy).

**Blessed Gerlando**, religious (†c. 1271). Knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem; protector of widows and orphans.

## 20. Blessed Margaret Ball, martyr (†1584). Widow who sheltered persecuted priests. She was denounced by her own son and subjected to torture in prison in Dublin, Ireland, where she died at almost 70 years of age.

## 21. St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious (†1591 Rome).

**St. Leutfridus**, abbot (†738). He founded the Abbey of the Holy Cross in Évreux, France, and led it for almost forty-eight years.

## 22. St. Paulinus of Nola, bishop (†431 Nola - Italy).

**St. John Fisher**, bishop, and **St. Thomas More**, martyrs (†1535 London).

**St. Nicetas of Remesiana**, bishop (†c. 414). Praised by St. Paulinus of Nola for his work in evangelizing the barbarians.

## 23. St. Etheldreda, abbess (†679). Queen of Northumbria, England, who after twice refusing marriage received the religious veil from Bishop St. Wilfrid in the monastery she built at Ely.

## 24. Solemnity of Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

**St. Theodgar**, priest (†c. 1065). Missionary who built, in Vestervig, Denmark, the first of the wooden churches in the region.

## 25. 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time.

**Blessed Dorothy of Montau**, widow (†1394). After the death of her husband, she shut herself up in a cell built into the wall of the cathedral in Marienwerder (today in Poland), devoting herself to prayer and penance.

## 26. St. Joseph Ma Taishun, martyr (†1900). Physician and catechist killed at the age of sixty during the anti-Christian persecution in China.

## 27. Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

**St. Cyril of Alexandria**, bishop and Doctor of the Church (†444 Alexandria - Egypt).

**St. Samson**, priest (†560). According to tradition, he erected a hospital in Constantinople at the suggestion of the Emperor Justinian I, whom he had cured of an illness.

## 28. St. Irenaeus, bishop and martyr (†c. 202 Lyons - France).

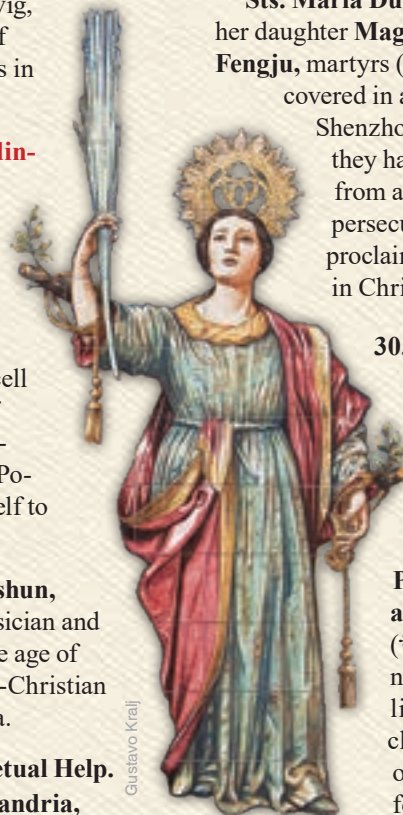
**St. Paul I**, Pope (†767). He wrote to the Emperors Constantine V and Leo IV to re-establish the ancient veneration of sacred images. He transferred the bodies of martyrs from ruined cemeteries to churches and monasteries.

## 29. Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles.

**Sts. Maria Du Tianshi** and her daughter **Magdalena Du Fengju**, martyrs (†1900). Discovered in a reed bed near Shenzhou, China, where they had been hiding from anti-Christian persecution. They died proclaiming their faith in Christ.

## 30. First Martyrs of the Holy Roman Church (†64 Rome).

**St. Thibault of Provins**, priest and hermit (†1066). Of noble French lineage, he exchanged honours and riches for a life of pilgrimage, mendicancy and contemplation.




**St. Paula - Church of the Martyrs, Malaga (Spain)**

# Only of Angels and the Strong?

Who is worthy to receive the Blessed Eucharist? It may seem, at first sight, that the Bread of the Angels and of the strong is not suited to our misery. We can, however, be worthy recipients of the Eucharistic Jesus.



 Lorena Mello

**E**verything was going well. Until one day their lives changed completely. For one insane action, they lost a world of wonders and found themselves cast into a terrible vale of tears... Yes, dear reader, I am referring to the story of Adam and Eve, or rather, to our history. Expelled from Terrestrial Paradise, several curses fell upon both of them, which would unfold in their descendants over the millennia. One of them is expressed thus in Sacred Scripture: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Gn 3:19).

It is understood that these words allude to the effort that man would henceforth have to make to obtain his own sustenance. But leaving aside this tragic scenario, the divine words arouse a certain curiosity: if God mentions bread so naturally in this passage, was it not already known

from the beginning of human existence? And then another question arises: “Adam and Eve, was it you who made bread? Or did the Eternal Father give it to you, as ‘bread come down from Heaven’ (cf. Ps 77:24)?” I leave the answer to your imagination, dear reader, to move on to a more transcendent question.

Some theologians raise the hypothesis that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity would have become incarnate even in the absence of original sin, in order to crown the work of creation with the hypostatic union.<sup>1</sup> If this is true, can we not conjecture that the Most Holy Eucharist would also have been instituted?

Perhaps this is why bread had been present at meals since Eden, making its use customary, predisposing humanity it to desire an inconceivably superior bread, as is Holy Communion.

In any case, the moment of the institution of this august Sacrament arrived when, on Holy Thursday, Our Lord proclaimed: “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you” (Lk 22:15). The Heart of Jesus thrilled to give Himself at last as food for human nature, and to remain with us until the end of the world (cf. Mt 28:20)!

“Behold the Bread of Angels, become food for pilgrims; true bread for God’s children.”<sup>2</sup> The generations have followed one another since the Last Supper, and the fervour of the faithful has never ceased to seek new expressions to praise the Eucharist. And one of the titles found was *Bread of the strong*.

Bread of Angels, Bread of the strong... “The consecrated Host is not a food fit for me, I am neither a strong person nor an angelic spirit,”



First Communion in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

someone might conclude. How much cowardice and vacillation in the faith, how many shameful capitulations before the temptations of the enemy! If the Eucharist had been given to the inhabitants of Terrestrial Paradise, there would have been some proportion. But to us?

Far be it from us to fall into this lie of the devil! In promoting frequent Communion, St. Pius X taught that the reception of the Blessed Sacrament is not a prize for the perfect, but an aid for our weakness. The secret

is in *how*, and by what *means*, we present ourselves to receive the Sacrament of the Altar.

Even if our conscience does not accuse us of mortal sin, we feel a certain unworthiness before the Eucharistic Jesus. How can we overcome this and draw from the heavenly banquet its most sublime effects? There is only one way: receive Him through the Blessed Virgin. She, the most perfect devotee of the Eucharist, prepares our soul by clothing it with her virtues to make us worthy recipi-

ents of her Son. She then receives and adores Him in our name. Therefore, “Nowhere do we creatures find Him nearer to us and more adapted to our weakness than in Mary, since it was for that end that He came and dwelt in Her.”<sup>3</sup>

We will only fully avail ourselves of this rich banquet through Our Lady’s intercession, since everywhere else Jesus will always be the Bread of Angels and the strong; but in Mary He becomes for us the “Bread of children.”<sup>4</sup> ✧

<sup>1</sup> Most theologians believe that the Incarnation took place only to remedy sin. Others, like St. Rupert of Salzburg, St. Albert the Great, Duns Scotus and St. Francis de Sales, take a different view. St. Thomas Aquinas is in the first

group, but he ends his explanation on the subject by recognizing that, for the power of God, nothing would prevent the Eternal Word from becoming incarnate without the existence of sin (cf. ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *Jesus*

*Cristo e a vida cristã*. Campinas: Ecclesiae, 2020, p.54-57; ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. III, q.1, a.3).

<sup>2</sup> From the sequence *Lauda Sion*, composed by St. Thom-

as Aquinas for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

<sup>3</sup> ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *The Secret of Mary*, Charlotte NC: TAN, 2012, n.20.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Idem, *ibidem*.



## *The Sacred Heart Is Yours*

*She is, after God, and as much She could possibly be, living charity, living zeal. What would She not do to shed but a ray of divine life into a single soul!*

*You desire, O Mary, to distribute grace. Very well; you will be its Mother. The very source of grace is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is yours; take it, open it, pour it out. Give this happiness at once to Him, to yourself, and to souls. Distribute, give. You will never give all, for He is infinite. You will never give too much, for He desires to give infinitely.*

*Fr. Jules Chevalier, MSC*

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart -  
Church of St. Peter, Ciudad Real  
(Spain)