



HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Nº 214 - August 2025

*True Glory Is Only
Born of Pain*



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Apostolic Vigour and Supernatural Spirit

Pius X had an extremely sensitive heart: he was easily moved and effusive. But these outpourings of his heart never left him with his hands tied, as the saying goes.

He was inexorable when it came to preventing the least possibility of fatal ambiguity. Whether coming from declared external enemies or from the internal unwary and wayward; he never tired of calling out to souls and hearts, both ‘in season and out of season’ – in the expression of the Apostle – to be faithful to the Word revealed by Christ.

On those occasions he was seized with an apostolic vigour and an ‘energy that no one was able to resist’, and there was no concern that could daunt him. He was the Pope of the supernatural, who drew his strength not from human, but from divine powers: an in-

domitable Pope who, on one of the first days of his pontificate, to someone who asked him what his policy would be, replied without hesitation, lifting his eyes and pointing to a small crucifix that he had before him: ‘There is my policy’. [...]

Before making any important decision, Pius X would reflect at length in light of the Faith and with the aid of prayer; he would consult the most eminent Cardinals and the most upright and sagacious prelates, but without allowing himself to be dominated by any of them, because he knew that the responsibility for his actions rested on his own shoulders.

DAL-GAL, Girolamo. *Pius X. The Saintly Pope*.

Madrid: Palabra, 1985, p.271-272

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Reinhardt Hauke (CC BY-SA 3.0)

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filles-de-la-charite.org

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Send your questions to Fr. Ricardo, by email:
ourreadersask@heralds.org



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

I read the following sentence in a book: "As the holy Fathers have always affirmed." What does this mean? How does the author know that all the holy Fathers have said this? Or does it have a specific meaning?

Oswaldo Wójcik – Ponta Grossa (Brazil)

The question is very timely, as it gives us an opportunity to clarify a very common doubt.

In the classical language of the Church, the terms *Holy Fathers*, *Fathers of the Church* or even just *Fathers* designate a very specific group of people. In this case, the word *Father* does not refer to priests, but is used in the paternal sense, as we will explain later. There are deacons among the Holy Fathers, like St. Ephrem; numerous bishops, like St. Augustine; and even some who did not so much as receive the first degree of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, like St. Maximus the Confessor.

So what are the characteristics that define a Father of the Church? There are three, well-defined ones:

1. Antiquity: among the Fathers of the West, or Latin Fathers – who wrote in Latin – the last of them is St. Gregory the Great, the Pope who died in 604. Among the Eastern Fathers – who usually wrote in Greek – the last is St. John Damascene, who died in 749.

2. Orthodoxy of doctrine: a Father of the Church must be a theologian who has left a written legacy for future generations, in full conformity with the Faith and recognized as an authority in the Church.

3. Holiness of life:

Let us consider a few examples. St. Thomas Aquinas was a great saint and wrote theological marvels, but he lived in the 13th century, so he cannot be counted among the Fathers because he lacks antiquity; he receives the title of Doctor of the Church. St. Martin of Tours lived in the 4th century, was a saint and a great defender of the true Faith, but he left no writings, so he is not numbered among the Fathers of the Church either. Finally, there were outstanding theologians from the beginning of Christianity who, because they lacked holiness of life, are not included among the

Holy Fathers; however, their works are studied in Patristics because they made important contributions to the development and explanation of Catholic doctrine.

The title of *Pater* - Latin for *Father* – is applied to these men, obviously not to imply that they are progenitors of the Church, a direct work of God, but rather because they were chosen by Providence to protect the Mystical Bride of Christ in her early stages from the attacks of her enemies, especially those who wanted to distort her doctrine. Many had to defend the Faith with their own blood, like the great St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who was martyred in 258.

Because of this, and owing to the fact that they were in some way chosen instruments to instruct the faithful, they are called *Fathers*.

An example of the use of the name *Fathers* in the history of the Church can be found in a beautiful letter by St. Boniface, in which this holy apostle expresses feeling unworthy of the great mission entrusted to him:

“Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror for my sins overwhelms me!” (Ps 55:5); I would very much like to abandon the helm of the Church entirely, if I could find such a precedent in the Fathers or in Sacred Scripture” (*Epistle 78*).

To avoid confusion, one last detail: the word *Fathers* can also be used to refer to the participants in an ecumenical council, with a meaning different from the one explained above. But this is a less common usage, the explanation of which would be beyond our present scope...

From now on, when we see the terms *Holy Fathers*, *Fathers of the Church* or *Fathers* in any book or, above all, in official Church documents, we will know that it is a reference to these bastions of the Catholic Faith from the first centuries of Christianity.



WITHOUT THE CROSS, THERE IS NO SALVATION

St. Thomas Aquinas, the only author whose doctrine the Catholic Church has taken as her own (cf. ST. PAUL VI. *Lumen Ecclesiae*, n.24), argues that the main element of Christian doctrine is “salvation effected by the Cross” (*Super I Epistolam ad Corinthios*, c.I, lect.3).

Jesus Himself prepared His disciples for His redemptive Passion (cf. Mt 16:21), as well as its circumstances: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15). The Saviour also said that to truly be His disciple, one must deny oneself and take up one’s cross every day (cf. Lk 9:23)!

Every authentic Christian, therefore, needs to be a “cross-bearer” or a “crusader” in their commitment to the cross. Through it everything is consummated (cf. Jn 19:30) and through it Christ draws everyone to Himself (cf. Jn 12:32). The cross is literally *crucial*.

However, it causes scandal. Not only to the Sanhedrin, but to the Apostles themselves – to the point that Peter rebuked the Divine Master for announcing it (cf. Mt 16:22). On the very threshold of the Redeemer’s sacrifice, “all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Mt 26:56) and, after the Crucifixion, we still see the discouragement of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, longing for a merely human restoration of Israel (cf. Lk 24:21).

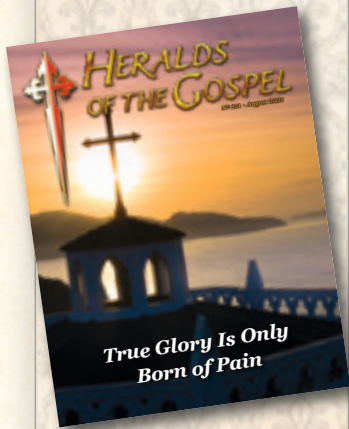
In the early days of the Church, no shortage of heresies tried to mask the role of the cross, such as Docetism, according to which the Incarnation of Christ was only an appearance, and the sacrifice of Calvary a mere allegory because, being God, Jesus could not suffer. The Docetists thus denied *in radice* the meaning of suffering in Christian life.

It seems that many Catholics today still favour a kind of “practical Docetism”. Like the disciples, they flee from the cross, are indifferent to the workings of the Most High in the world and live as if Our Lord had not been crucified. According to the Aquinate’s statement mentioned above, without the cross – both Christ’s and one’s own – the core of Christianity also disappears.

This mistaken mentality can be seen in certain religious practices: in a sentimentality that makes religion syrupy sweet and averse to the spirit of struggle and of the cross; in the superficiality with which every excuse is made to avoid a greater self-giving to God and neighbour; in the pusillanimity that evades seeking the things that are above, where we find the Wood that draws everyone. These deviations were summed up in a succinct expression by Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira: “white heresy”, that is, a dilute heresy, essentially Docetist, which has serious consequences for the life of the Catholic.

The secret, therefore, is to find the meaning of life in the cross itself – not to endure suffering in a stoic way, but to discover in it the glory that the Apostle proclaimed: “But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal 6:14).

The cross is not wearisome, but sweet, as the hymn *Crux fidelis* sings; it is also strong and triumphant, because it guides us to the heavenly homeland: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Without the cross, therefore, there is no salvation. ✠



*View from the
belfry of Our
Lady of the Pillar
Chapel, Ubatuba
(Brazil)*

Photo: Thiago Tamura



The Redemptive Power of Suffering

In the eyes of the Lord, the suffering of the just and the innocent is particularly precious, more so than that of the sinner; the latter, in fact, suffers only for himself, for self-expiation, while the innocent makes suffering a capital of redemption for others.

THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

Suffering, an inescapable burden of human existence but also a factor of possible personal growth, is “censored”, rejected as useless, indeed opposed as an evil, always and in every way to be avoided. [...] More than anything else, it is the problem of suffering which challenges faith and puts it to the test. [...]

When the prevailing tendency is to value life only to the extent that it brings pleasure and well-being, suffering seems like an unbearable setback, something from which one must be freed at all costs.

Excerpts from: ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Evangelium vitae, 25/3/1995

CHRIST TEACHES US THE DIGNITY OF SUFFERING

[In the light of the Cross] suffering becomes sacred. Before – and even for those who forget that they are Christians – suffering seemed pure misfortune, pure inferiority, more worthy of contempt and disgust than deserving of understanding, compassion and love. It was the suffering Christ who gave man’s pain a superhuman character, an object of respect, care and worship [...].

There is still more. Christ not only shows the dignity of suffering; Christ launches a call to suffering. This voice, children and brethren, is the most mysterious and the most beneficial that has

ever crossed the stage of human life. Christ invites suffering to emerge from its hopeless uselessness, to be, together with His own, a positive source of good, a source not only of the most sublime virtues – from patience to heroism and wisdom – but also of the expiatory, redemptive and beatifying capacity proper to the Cross of Christ.

Excerpts from: ST. PAUL VI.
Speech, 27/3/1964

WHEN SUFFERING BECOMES FRUITFUL

While it is true that human suffering always remains a great mystery, it nevertheless receives meaning, or rather fruitfulness, from the Cross of Jesus. [...]

Know that the suffering of the just and the innocent is particularly precious in the eyes of the Lord, more so than that of the sinner; the latter, in fact, suffers only for himself, for self-expiation, while the innocent makes suffering a capital of redemption for others.

Excerpts from ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Speech, 24/9/1979

THE FRUITFULNESS OF THE CHURCH DEPENDS ON THE CROSS

All the fruitfulness of the Church and of the Holy See depends on the

Cross of Christ. Otherwise, it is only appearance, if not worse. [...]

For example, a priest who personally carries a heavy cross because of his ministry, yet every day goes to the office and tries to do his job to the best of his ability with love and faith, this priest participates and contributes to the fruitfulness of the Church. Similarly, a father or mother of a family who lives in a difficult situation at home, with a child who is cause for concern or a sick parent, and continues his or her work with commitment, that man or woman are fruitful with the fruitfulness of Mary and of the Church.

Excerpts from: LEO XIV.
Homily, 9/6/2025

THE REDEEMING POWER OF SUFFERING

Christ is the only one who is truly sinless and, what is more, who cannot sin. He is therefore the One – the only One – who absolutely does not deserve suffering. And yet He is also the one who accepted it most fully and decisively, accepted it voluntarily and with love. [...]

Thus, through Christ, the meaning of suffering changes radically. It is no longer enough to see it as punishment for sins. It is necessary to discover in it the redemptive and salvific power of love.

Excerpts from: ST. JOHN PAUL II.
General Audience, 9/11/1988

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

He is also a Victim and for us since He substitutes Himself for sinful man. Now the exhortation of the Apostle, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," requires that all Christians should possess, as far as is humanly possible, the same dispositions as those which the divine Redeemer had when He offered Himself in sacrifice: that is to say, they should in a humble attitude of mind, pay adoration, honour, praise and thanksgiving to the supreme majesty of God. Moreover, it means that they must assume to some extent the character of a victim, that they deny themselves as the Gospel commands, that freely and of their own accord they do penance and that each detests and satisfies for his sins. It means, in a word, that we must all undergo with Christ a mystical death on the cross so that we can apply to ourselves the words of St. Paul, "With Christ I am nailed to the cross."

Excerpt from: PIUS XII.
Mediator Dei, 20/11/1947

A PARTICLE OF THE TREASURE OF REDEMPTION

It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. [...]

Those who share in the sufferings of Christ preserve in their own sufferings a very special particle of the infinite treasure of the world's Redemption, and can share this treasure with others.

Excerpts from: ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Salvifici doloris, 11/2/1984

PARTAKERS IN THE EXPIATION

The expiatory passion of Christ is renewed and in a manner continued and fulfilled in His mystical body, which is the Church. For, to use once more the

words of St. Augustine, "Christ suffered whatever it behoved Him to suffer; now nothing is wanting of the measure of the sufferings. Therefore the sufferings were fulfilled, but in the Head; there were yet remaining the sufferings of Christ in His Body." [...] Rightly, therefore, does Christ, still suffering in His Mystical Body, desire to have us partakers of His expiation, and this is also demanded by our intimate union with Him, for since we are "the Body of Christ and members of member" (1 Cor 12:27), whatever the Head suffers, all the members must suffer with it.

Excerpts from: PIUS XI.
Miserentissimus Redemptor, 8/5/1928

ALL CAN SHARE IN THE REDEMPTION

In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ. [...]

Christ does not explain in the abstract the reasons for suffering, but before all else He says: "Follow Me!" Come! Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world, a salvation achieved through my suffering! Through my Cross. Gradually, as the individual takes up his cross, spiritually uniting himself to the Cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him.

Excerpts from: ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Salvifici doloris, 11/2/1984

INSERTING MINOR HARDSHIPS INTO CHRIST'S GREAT SUFFERING

As for prayer, so for suffering: the history of the Church is very rich in witnesses who spent themselves for others without reserve, at the cost of harsh suffering. The greater the hope that enlivens us, the greater is the ability within us to suffer for the love of truth and good, joyfully offering up the minor and major daily hardships and inserting them into Christ's great "com-passion".

Excerpt from BENEDICT XVI.
Homily, 6/2/2008

"Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world, a salvation achieved through my suffering!"

"Christ on the Cross with St. Dominic",
by Fra Angelico - San Marco Museum
Florence (Italy)





Our Heart Rests Only in God



✠ Fr. Alessandro Schurig, EP

*If the soul
knows how to
contemplate
the reflection
of the Creator
in creatures,
and thus
grow in love
for divine
perfections,
then it will
find deep
and lasting
happiness*

Nowadays we see of all kinds of devices designed to make life easier, and they are multiplying at an almost frenetic pace: from personal grooming tools to the most advanced means of communication and locomotion, our daily lives are increasingly based on technology.

However, it is not hard for a more attentive observer to see that yesterday's state-of-the-art computer is already outdated and stored in a closet today... The most powerful car now in vogue, coveted by countless buyers, will tomorrow be passed over for another and will end its days in a junkyard...

What could we say about mobile phones, which are feverishly acquired at all ages and then discarded like the grass of the Scriptures: "In the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers" (Ps 90:6)?

So what is the point of all these inventions? All "is vanity and a great evil" (Eccl 2:21)... The sad spectacle we see every day, of hundreds of people with their eyes fixed on screens, can suddenly fade away with a major power outage, leaving millions of souls utterly disoriented, because they have placed their hope in creatures. They would do well to repeat the words of today's Gospel: "Take heed [...] for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk 12:15).

Should we then preach the complete stripping away of earthly riches and live instead in savage primitivism in order to find happiness and well-being?

The human soul has an innate thirst for the infinite and the Absolute, as St. Augustine so aptly

cried out: "You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You."¹ Now, if a man applies his love to a creature only to satisfy an unbalanced desire for selfish enjoyment, he lowers himself to the level of that being and will soon be frustrated with that pleasure, for it did not bring him the contentment he desired.

On the other hand, if the soul knows how to contemplate the reflection of the Creator in creatures, and through them seeks to grow in the knowledge of and enthusiasm for divine perfections, then it will find deep and lasting happiness. This is the fundamental advice that this Sunday's Liturgy offers us, through the words of the Apostle to the Gentiles: "seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth" (Col 3:1-2).

If we wish to be rich before God (cf. Lk 12:21), let us beg for the grace that Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira asked for in a prayer he composed:

"O Lord Good Jesus, make me love, in an upright and holy way, everything that is great, marvellous, regal and elevated. Give me the grace to be completely unsatisfied by the trifles that until now have attracted me and to be completely enamoured by the great things that leave me weary. Whoever is cold and resistant to the appeals You make to human love through what is holy and marvellous on earth, is also so in relation to all the infinite horizons of the Faith that we must contemplate." ✠

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE. *Confessions*. L.I, c.1, n.1.

Members of the Heralds of the Gospel
pray atop the Pedra do Baú,
São Bento do Sapucaí (SP)

Do Not Be Afraid! Trust and You Will Attain Glory

✠ Fr. Aumir Antonio Scomparin, EP



There are different degrees and types of fear, which can be caused by physical, psychological, social and even religious stimuli. Accounts of some of them appear in both the Old and New Testaments to warn us against lack of faith or distrust in God. For example, shortly after the first sin Adam responded to the Lord who was looking for him: “I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Gn 3:10). And of St. Peter, it is narrated that he miraculously walked on water, but “when he saw the wind, he was afraid” (Mt 14:30).

From another point of view, the Holy Scriptures also deal with fear as a factor in attaining virtue: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prv 9:10). This reverential fear teaches us to trust in God’s power, to let go of earthly things and to face dangers with courage, because it is founded on faith, humility and love of God.

While the effects of natural fear are anxiety, agitation and dread, those of reverential fear are calm, serenity and trust. Those who suffer the former believe little in God; those who experience the latter draw closer to Him and seek holiness. This is how the responsorial Psalm of this Liturgy is best understood: “See, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope for his kindness, to deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine” (33:18-19).

The Gospel, in turn, emphasizes new aspects of reverential fear when Jesus Christ says: “Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom” (Lk 12:32). This exhortation, so marked by predilection, by confidence and certainty of victory, contains a promise of reward and glory for those who are faithful, echoed in another verse: “the master will put the servant in charge of all his property” (Lk 12:44).

The weak and timid disciples are favored by the Father’s benevolent gaze, which promises them the eternal Kingdom. Who pleased Him more than the Blessed Virgin? Jesus’ words recall the angelic greeting addressed to her: “Do not be afraid, Mary,

for You have found favour with God” (Lk 1:30). The canticle of the *Magnificat* also expresses the wonder of the Almighty and the promise of glory made to Our Lady: “for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48).

Regarding this Gospel, Msgr. João comments:

“It was Mary who, within human nature, raised her virginal soul to magnify the Lord, making Him her treasure. [...] She teaches us to consider this earth as a preparatory school for Heaven. For the treasures of this world perish, they are vile; frequently deceiving, unsettling and impoverishing us. [...] The opposite holds true for heavenly treasures. They ennoble and console us, ensuring us of eternal happiness.”¹

May our hearts be eager to enter this preparatory school for Heaven inaugurated by Our Lady, the foundation of which is humility, submission and the slavery of love for God. ✠

*In the
uncertainties
of this life, let
us never allow
ourselves to
be invaded
by a servile
fear that
turns us away
from God*

¹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. Is Prayer Alone Enough? In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton. LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2012, v.VI, p.276.



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“The Miraculous Catch”, by Raphael Sanzio - Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Love That Attracts and Divides

✠ Fr. Vicente de Jesús Croes, EP



*Let us avoid
the illusion
that doing
good will only
bring applause
and praise.
The apostle
must be
prepared for
persecution
and
contradiction*

This Sunday's readings may seem strange in a world where the word *love* has acquired a connotation of complicity and unconditional acceptance. In fact, very different from this concept is the reality faced by those who, moved by authentic charity, have decided to follow in the Saviour's footsteps ...

Although acts of love and dedication for the salvation of souls initially arouse admiration and enthusiasm, it is not uncommon for this reaction to degenerate into envy, hatred and slander. This is what happened to Our Lord Jesus Christ: acclaimed for His miracles and received as King on Palm Sunday (cf. Jn 12:13), days later He heard from His own countrymen the unanimous cry of "Crucify Him", before the astonished gaze of Pilate (Jn 19:6).

The first reading also gives us an example of this truth, when it tells of the fate of the prophet Jeremiah for preaching what the Lord had commanded him:

"In those days, the princes said to the king: 'Jeremiah ought to be put to death; he is demoralizing the soldiers who are left in this city, and all the people, by speaking such things to them'" (Jer 38:4).

Now, many begin the path of virtue moved by a certain love of God and neighbour, albeit superficial, without thinking of the obstacles that await them. And when these arise, they lose heart... The attitude of the Divine Master was the opposite, as we hear in the second reading: "Consider how He endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb 12:3).

From all eternity Jesus knew the effects that the fire of His love for the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls would produce: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division" (Lk 12:49-51).

Division... Our Lord had already been baptized by John in the Jordan. The baptism to which He refers in this Gospel passage is therefore His Passion and Death, a baptism of blood, pain and tribulation. He desired this holocaust with all His heart, wanting it to be fulfilled as soon as possible, because He knew that this was the consummation of His mission, which began with the Incarnation and was driven by an infinite love for sinful humanity!

Here is a lesson for us. When God calls us to fulfil a vocation, to carry out a work of apostolate, to overcome a vice or a whim, to abandon an occasion of sin, in short, to love Him above all things in our daily lives, let us obey His voice without delay!

Finally, let us pray to Mary Most Holy that She will embrace us with her love, and that her Divine Son will use us as faithful instruments for spreading this purifying fire over the entire face of the earth. ✠



"The stoning of St. Paul", by Jean-Baptiste de Champaigne - Arnot Art Museum, New York

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Let Us Convert Before the Door Is Closed

✠ Fr. João Marcos Cardoso, EP



According to contemporary thinking, the word *goodness* can designate a thousand qualities, except for one: seriousness. And so it has become synonymous with acquiescence to error or wilful blindness to what needs to be corrected or warned against. But in God, goodness is something very different... In the Gospel for the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, the goodness of the Divine Redeemer draws our attention to the serious and decisive moments that await us on the occasion of the particular and universal judgement.

The greater the height, the greater the fall. The higher one is on the path of holiness, the greater the risk of the slightest concession to temptation and sin. St. Teresa of Jesus saw the terrible place in hell to which she would go if she remained on the path of vanity and lukewarmness.¹

Our Lord Jesus Christ makes it clear in the Gospel that the important thing is not whether the saved will be many or few, but to make every effort to be one of them. “Many will try to enter and will not succeed” (Lk 13:24) because – mystery of human infidelity! – not even those who ate and drank before the Redeemer and listened to His preaching (cf. Lk 13:26), in other words, who have participated in Holy Mass, will be recognized by Him if, by settling into their faults and always leaving it until later to change their lives, they fail to put into practice what they have received.

In fact, putting it off until it “gets dark” – the image of the master of the house who gets up to lock the door at nightfall (cf. Lk 13:25) – symbolizes the moment when Jesus will assume the position of Judge: it is the individual “night” – death – or the

universal “night” – the end of history – after which the doors will be closed and the particular or final judgement will begin.

Those who, by stifling their conscience, have led a life of duplicity and hypocrisy will at first show surprise at God’s denial (cf. Lk 13:25-26). They will do this because they have so hardened their conscience that they are incapable of recognizing their own wickedness. This confirms a truth that is often forgotten: no one can profess the Faith and live contrary to it for long; soon they will create doctrines for themselves that justify their bad actions...

Through Baptism we have been accepted and loved by our Heavenly Father as His children, but in order to fulfil our mission we must allow ourselves to be corrected by Him. Such is His love for us that He has given us as our Mother and Advocate the One whom St. Augustine calls “the form of God.”² If, sincerely renouncing

our sins, defects and whims, we throw ourselves confidently into this “divine mould”, we will undoubtedly enter through the narrow door and will not hear from the Divine Judge the terrible sentence: “I do not know where you are from. Depart from Me, all you evildoers” (Lk 13:27). ✠



Final Judgement - Oldmasters Museum, Brussels

The goodness of the Divine Redeemer alerts us to the most serious moment of our lives, because we should not begin to prepare for it only when it starts to “get dark”

¹ Cf. ST. TERESA OF JESUS. *Libro de la vida*, c.XXXII, n.1-7.

² ST. AUGUSTINE. *Sermo 208*, apud GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, OP, Réginald. *La Madre del Salvador y nuestra vida interior*. 3.ed. Buenos Aires: Desclee de Brouwer, 1954, p.279.

A God Who Is... Meek and Humble?

✠ Fr. Luiz Henrique de Oliveira, EP



The notion of an Incarnate God who gives us an example of humility and meekness may seem commonplace nowadays, but it meant a real change in criteria when Our Lord preached it

The Liturgy for the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time highlights a marvellous aspect of the Soul of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Gospel Acclamation invites us to imitate: “learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart” (Mt 11:29).

This declaration, which today can even be heard with a certain carelessness and superficiality, sounded shocking in a historical era when the leaders of nations were tyrants (cf. Mk 10:42); the law of the strongest reigned, and pagan gods epitomized the manifestation of human vices.

Throughout Classical Antiquity, most people believed in some kind of divinity, and there was such a proliferation of images of idealized gods intended to meet the most diverse human expectations, that according to the Roman satirist Petronius, in Athens it was “easier to meet a god than a man.”¹

St. Thomas² teaches us that through the normal use of reason, man can come to the conclusion that there is a creator God, but he would never be able to know what this God is like if He did not reveal Himself.

In this sense, Jesus manifested Himself very gradually, opening up the understanding of those who listened to Him so that they could understand a God who was opposite in every way to the dominant mentality (cf. Mk 10:43-45), corroborating His teachings with numerous miracles so that, in the end – after the Holy Spirit was sent – they would truly know and love Him.

The Gospel shows us Jesus at a banquet “noticing how they were choosing the places of honour at the table” (Lk 14:7). With divine gentleness and marvellous charm, He initially teaches them the human advantages of practising humility: “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet [...] go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, ‘My friend, move up to a higher position.’ Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Lk 14:8-11).

Only then does He tell them about their reward in eternal life: “Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Lk 14:13-14).

Two thousand years later, our Divine Model – today, perhaps more especially against hypocrisy than impiety – shows us that true humility does not consist in having a good reputation among men by means of an affected submissiveness or simplicity, but in a habitual attitude of gratitude and praise through which one returns to the Creator all that one has received from His hands.

He gave us an example of this by continually referring to the Father: “for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn 15:15); “even though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me” (Jn 10:38).

I invite you, dear reader, to come and follow the spiritual path travelled by Msgr. João, founder of the Heralds of the Gospel: let us marvel at Our Lord Jesus Christ, well aware that admiration makes the one who admires similar to the one who is admired. ✠

Detail of “Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee”, by Frans Francken the Younger - Church of Our Lady, Bruges (Belgium)



¹ PETRONIUS. *Satyricon*, n.17.

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

A TWOFOLD RETURN TO LIFE!

It was 1849. The young Charles, who frequented the Oratory founded by St. John Bosco and was then fifteen years old, had fallen seriously ill and was given no hope of survival by the doctors. Appalled by the news, his parents asked him if he wanted to go to Confession. Without hesitation, the boy asked them to call Don Bosco as soon as possible.

They rushed to the Oratory, but... the Saint was not in Turin. Despite the lad's distress, there was no other solution but to call another priest. Two days later, Charles left this life.

Returning to the Oratory and being informed of the family's insistent requests, Don Bosco hurried to their residence.

No sooner had he arrived than he received the news of the death. However, he confined himself to saying that the boy had not died, but was only asleep. The weeping relatives insisted that the boy was already cold and stiff, to which the Saint categorically replied to the contrary.

They took him to the room where the youth was laid out and, as he slowly approached the coffin, a doubt crossed Don Bosco's mind: had Charles made his last Confession well?

He asked everyone to leave him alone in the room, and they obliged. After praying, he blessed the young man and cried out twice:

"Charles, Charles, get up!"

With this imperative order, the boy, as if awakening from a deep sleep, got up and soon recognized Don Bosco. He began to tell the priest that he had had a terrible dream. He had seen himself on the edge of a furnace full of coal and flames. Many demons were following him and trying to seize him. As he was about to be dragged into

shame, Charles had concealed a serious sin in his last Confession...

Now deeply repentant for having done so, he again declared his faults, this time in full, and with real and sincere contrition. He then asked Don Bosco to always strongly recommend sincerity in Confession.

Finally, the Saint asked him if he wanted to continue living or go to Heaven, whose doors were now open to him. Without hesitation, Charles replied that he wanted to go there. Lying down again and closing his eyes, he gave his soul to God for ever.

What a great miracle can be worked by a single Confession made with real sincerity! This loving tribunal was set up by Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is eagerly waiting to forgive those who recognize their faults with repentance and humility; how He desires to pour out all His love upon them!

Yet how many there are who, instead of embracing such mercy, despise, reject and, what is worse, misuse this priceless Sacrament of forgiveness!

For our part, may we never stray from friendship with God, but, if we have the misfortune of falling into sin, may we not hesitate to fly in haste to meet the One who, despite being Judge, welcomes with divine love those who come to Him with a contrite heart. ✠



How great a miracle can be worked in a single Confession made with true sincerity!

St. John Bosco - Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians, Turin (Italy)

that vortex of fire, a beautiful Lady came between him and the demons, saying: "Let him be, he has not been judged yet!"

But what was the reason for such a horrible "dream"? Out of



A Blessed Guest, through Whom God Visits Us

Those who accept suffering consciously and clearly, with a good disposition, find the secret to penetrating the Soul of Our Lord Jesus Christ and to uniting themselves more closely to Him.

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I once came across an article written on the subject of solitude. It was a story about a man with an unwelcoming appearance, who described his preferences and his lifestyle, stating that he so enjoyed complete isolation that he had chosen not to marry, because the idea of living with others horrified him. He lived his life alone, completely closed in on himself. He took no interest in anyone else and was annoyed whenever someone came to visit and touched his belongings...

When I read these statements, I immediately remembered Dona Lucilia. She was the exact opposite! At ninety-two years of age, she was concerned about the people who came to visit her son, because they often had to wait to be seen. So, in order to prevent them from becoming distressed by the delay, she would invite them into the living room and keep them company, so as to make their wait more pleasant.

What is the difference between these two types of souls?

Two positions of the soul in the face of pain

When analysing her treatment of others, we realize that there are two different stances in the face of suffering. The first is that of someone who avoids the cross, considering it undesirable, and clings to the enjoyment of life, seeking only to please himself; in other words, he is selfish.

The second is that of someone who, on the contrary, has embraced the cross with a view to the good of others. On certain days, Dona Lucilia may have felt ill or may not have slept at night and would have liked to remain in repose; but she made an effort to give herself completely to others, because she loved them as herself.

Woe to those who are insensitive to the miseries and needs of their neighbour, and seek to escape the suffering they should face! These people, if they live in peace, are deluded; and the delusion will be their punishment. Sooner or later the cross, enlarged, will pursue them, and they will have to continue on their way carrying a larger one than was intended for them. And, after spending their life between aversions and false delights, they will probably go to the place of eternal suffering, where all is bitterness and mad frustration.



There is a kind of soul that lives closed in on itself, with no concern for anyone else, seeking enjoyment in life and rejecting the least suffering

"The artist", by Aleksey Mikhailovich Korin - Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Someone, however, could raise the following doubt: does the fact of having enjoyed a certain well-being in this world or having been held in high esteem by others make one deserving of infinite punishment?

No. The problem is not in having possessions or a good position. Wealth, abundance, career, happiness, prestige or the admiration of others are not in themselves elements for condemnation, but on the contrary, gifts from God, which are appropriate even in the life of a saint. The error lies in the way a person values them and the intention with which they seek them.

The voluptuous, full of pride and sensuality, who practise injustice and live for constant gratification, disregarding the law and rebelling against God, are the ones upon whom the curse declared by Our Lord in the Gospel will fall: “Woe to you that are rich... Woe to you that are full now... Woe to you that laugh now... Woe to you, when all men speak well of you...” (Lk 6:24-26). Voluntarily and knowingly, they sacrificed on the altar of earthly gain all the eternal goods they would have received in the heavenly homeland.

Those, however, who accept suffering consciously and clearly, with a good disposition of soul, find the secret to penetrating the Soul of Our Lord Jesus Christ and uniting themselves more closely to Him. Whenever they endure hardships, they know they are more united to Him.

The benefits of suffering

Now, we may ask ourselves why suffering is so necessary. One reason is that, without it, creatures easily forget their dependence and close in on themselves.

Many, many people who enjoy a life full of satisfaction and delights – especially in the modern world, equipped with machines that work splendidly, and immersed in the full-colour atmosphere of cinematographic story lines and the “happy ending” mentality –



Sérgio Miyasaki

Other souls, however, are generous in accepting suffering and unite themselves all the more to God with each suffering that comes their way

Msgr. João in 1997

become accustomed to the idea that everything is going as well as possible and gradually fall into the tendency to think of themselves as gods.

This is what happened with the fallen angels, who desired to usurp the throne of the Most High soon after their creation (cf. Is 14:13-14), and with our first parents, when they sought to be like gods (cf. Gn 3:5).

Another reason for Providence to allow us to undergo tribulations is so that we do not fall into relativism and negligence through lack of vigilance. Since we are living in a land of exile, where we must practise the virtues through effort, God desires that we become strong warriors, in order to give us more merit.

In the Gospels we find some episodes that serve as a lesson in this regard.

The “spurs” of suffering

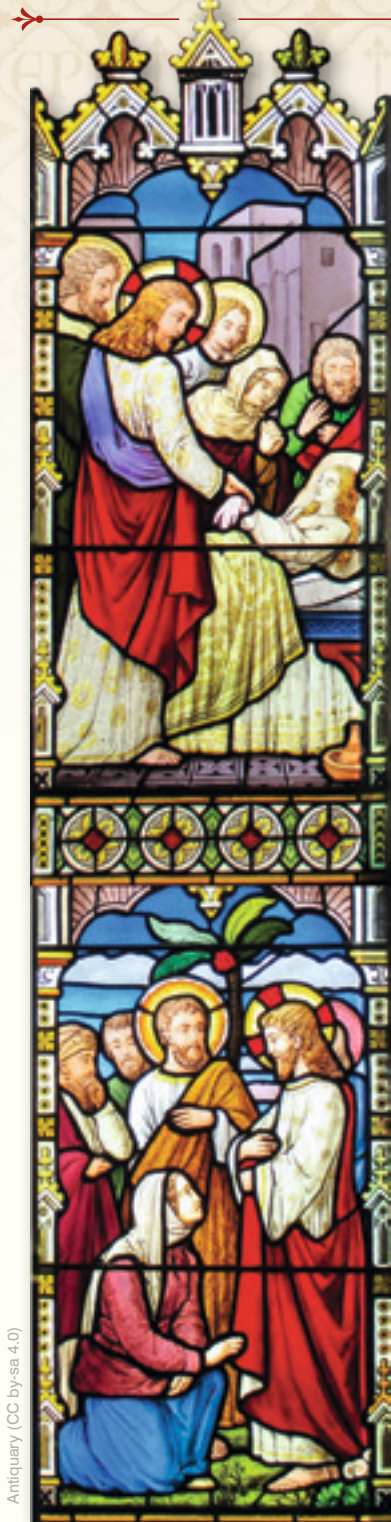
St. Matthew tells us that when Jesus was at table with publicans and sinners, the leader of the synagogue came into the banquet hall to speak with Him (cf. Mt 9:18). We know that in the perception of the Pharisees, who were strict

formalists, mingling with sinners was considered shameful, and they reproached Our Lord and the Apostles for sharing a meal with people of that sort.

What moved this man of high rank, whose responsibility it was to instruct the people to respect the Law, to confront public opinion and seek out the Divine Master in this circumstance? Would not the Pharisees – his own subordinates! – accuse him of transgressing the rules and moral prohibitions? Should he not have remained at the door and, with the authority proper to his eminent title, sent a servant to Jesus to ask Him to come out to speak to him?

He defied the atmosphere surrounding him and entered the banquet hall to have a dialogue with Our Lord. Why? Because his heart was pierced by a cruel affliction: his only daughter, a twelve-year-old girl whom he loved, was ill and near death.

It is undeniable that this man had an incipient faith and that the fame of the Saviour’s many miracles, His luminous sanctity and His attractive goodness had touched him inwardly. But it was the tempest and the trial that solidified confidence in his soul and made him



Antiquary (CC by-sa 4.0)

Suffering plays an essential role in human life, for in addition to purifying and enlightening man, it prompts him to seek his Creator

The resurrection of the daughter of Jairus and the cure of the haemorrhaging woman, St. Andrew's Church, Nuthurst (England)

overcome his scruples. If he were not experiencing this crisis, he would not have prostrated himself before Our Lord begging: "Come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." Misfortune benefitted him by removing the scales from his eyes and opening them.

A little further on in the Gospel we encounter the scene of the haemorrhaging woman who had been ailing for twelve years and who obtained an instantaneous cure from Our Lord (cf. Mt 9:20-22). Her magnificent act of faith marked history and will profit humanity until the end of the world.

Would this lady, who proceeded so admirably, have elbowed her way through the crowd and struggled into its midst, facing the tension of concealing such a humiliating condition, according to the conceptions of the time, had it not been for the affliction that was torturing her? Would she have touched the mantle of the Great Wonderworker with that unknown, mysterious, and almost incomprehensible impetus that only pain, suffering and dependence inspire?

In her case, as well as in that of the synagogue leader, two values met: on one hand, need and anguish; on the other, faith, hope and charity. However, when the latter are inconsistent and imperfect, there is no other way: the spurs of suffering are needed to set them in motion.

Suffering impels us to seek God

These two examples are profoundly elucidative of the vital role that suffering plays in life. Hardship corrects camouflaged thoughts, amends prejudices and erroneous criteria; it frees the soul from self-love and false points of honour; it makes anger and resentment evaporate, bringing the spirit into consonance with its true goal. Pain enlightens man to be aware – and even convinced – of his weakness; it humbles him and helps him to acquire seriousness.

How marvellous is God's wisdom in the course of events! How much

good suffering has done on the face of the earth! How many graces have been obtained because of it! How often have the black hues of a well-accepted failure been transformed into golden light! And how often have the cold floors of a cathedral, a church or an oratory been warmed by the knees of those who suffer! If there were no anguish, these stones would only occasionally be touched, by a quick genuflection...

Suffering is a blessed guest, an element of friendship, a gift from God through which He often visits us. It makes people bend the knee and remain there, implore there, turn to the Lord there and there unite with Him. Pain helps the creature to raise his hands in search of the Creator and to join them in asking Him to extricate him from his insufficiency and lead him to where perfect love would have taken him.

A means of proving our love

Here we find yet another reason that explains why God sends us tribulations: it provides us with an opportunity to show Him through concrete acts and gestures, practised with detachment and total disinterest, that we truly love Him.

Love is above all else; it is stronger than pain. Great love is worth more than great pain.

Our love must be such that sickness, misfortunes, calumnies, mistreatment, excessive work, disappointments and setbacks in our apostolate, ingratitude, spiritual aridity... in short, all the difficulties that are sent to us by the hand of Providence should be received willingly, with courage and magnanimity of spirit, because in this way our intimacy and union of soul with our Lord Jesus Christ will grow and our enthusiasm and fervour will become stronger.

This is the mainstay of our interior life: a complete renunciation, full of joy; a delicious torment; tragedy and

adventure intertwined, enlivening each other instead of excluding each other! For what matters is to have this love, to know, above all else and in all circumstances, how to consult the divine interests above our own whims and preferences, ready to let ourselves be crucified if necessary. If we have love, we will lack nothing and we will gain glory.

***The Son suffered,
for the Father wished to
give Him all glory***

First of all, we must bear in mind the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ. During His earthly life, He encountered a complete lack of response among the Jewish people to His proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which later culminated in the Passion.

In that supreme anguish, He faced the pain of the scourging, the crowning with thorns and the piercing of the nails. He was transformed into a worm, and there were so many open wounds on His body that His bones could be counted (cf. Ps 21:7, 18). After death, they pierced Him with a lance, so that there was no blood left in His body.

And there was also a torment worse than the physical ones: He was presented before the mob, the soldiers and the executioners as a criminal, laden with the sins of all humanity. And Jesus accepted these insults as if He deserved them, without complaint or revolt, without any show of dissatisfaction.

If the least gesture of His, even the blink of an eye, was infinite and would have sufficed to make reparation for all the sins against God, why then did He bear all these wounds? Why did He, the Supreme Good, have to give His Blood and die on the Cross between two thieves? Why was the Father not moved when He heard the prayer that His Only-begotten Son addressed to Him from His human nature: “Father,

all things are possible to Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt” (Mk 14:36)?

Since the Son had become incarnate to bring Redemption, the Father wanted all the merits for Him as Man. And it was by bearing this terrible hour, in which the power of darkness seemed to be victorious, and feeling abandoned by God Himself, that He, after the triumphant cry, “*Consummatum est*”, would obtain full and total glory.

His divine words were then fulfilled: “The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:23-24).

From the seed of isolation, of failure and of apparent defeat, sown deep in the earth, would germinate true marvels of holiness over the course of the centuries – marvels which are, however, merely the first pale aurora of those to come in the future.

***Let us hold fast
to Our Lady in order
to suffer with joy***

When we encounter difficulties and feel the claws of suffering closing on us; when catastrophes, disasters and tragedies strike us; when we are unsuccessful; when we encounter obstacles of natural and preternatural origin, we should not be alarmed or astonished.

Far from taking a cowardly attitude in the face of pain, falling into interior discouragement or even murmuring against God, let us kneel down and bless all the evils and sufferings that come upon us. Following the example of the Redeemer, let us ask for the strength to drink the chalice of pain to the last drop and to have the courage of a knight who, never retreating, carries his cross to the end.

In the measure that earth, dust and darkness fall upon us, we will be able to germinate and participate in the fruitfulness of Our Lord and the divine capacity that He gave Mary, at the foot of the Cross, to bear fruit as a Mother. To her, who was a small and at first sight insignificant seed, so overlooked and disregarded, the whole of humanity was given as children, in the person of St. John (cf. Jn 19:26).

Let us hold fast to Our Lady in order to suffer with joy and to quickly reach the supernatural riches and wonders, where we will come to know “the breadth and length and height and depth” (Eph 3:18) of Jesus’ love. May our wills become enamoured with a mystical inebriation of love for the Cross! From now on, may the Cross be our banner, the standard that enraptures and inflames us until the last breath of life!

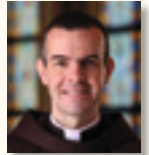
God’s provident goodness will become clearer to us when the storm clouds pass and we see the clear firmament of a starry night, or rather, the azure sky with a sun that is beginning to rise for the establishment of the Reign of Mary! ❖

Excerpts from oral expositions
given between 1990 and 2009



Learning to Suffer

The myth of earthly happiness without suffering is, for Dr. Plinio, one of the greatest causes of contemporary psychological imbalances. Only the Catholic view of suffering can fully comfort the human soul.



✠ Fr. Leandro Cesar Ribeiro, EP

There is a vast bibliography on the subject of *suffering*. Rivers of ink, both sacred and profane, have flowed alongside the rivers of blood, sweat and tears shed by the human race since Adam and Eve left Earthly Paradise. Discovering the origin of the universe, where we came from and where we are going, has always been a huge question. But recognizing the origin and purpose of our suffering and learning to bear it seems equally important.

The Catholic notion of suffering is incomparable: it was taught by the

crucified God Himself, who became sin for us (cf. 2 Cor 5:21) – this is the most obvious origin of suffering, the punishment for original sin – and who revealed to us its supreme purpose: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13).

Distilling the most precious nectar from sacred doctrine and exposing it in the light of his gift of wisdom, Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira coined the term “sufferative” to describe the disposition of the human soul faced with this prospect.

Based on extracts from various talks he gave between 1960 and 1990, we invite the reader to consider, in an

overview, some of his explanations in this regard.

The “sufferative” capacity

A deeper reflection on the subject began when Dr. Plinio was just twelve years old, as he observed how suffering had a remarkably stabilizing and balancing effect on the soul of his mother, Dona Lucilia.

But it was only when he took special note of the tragic biblical figure of holy Job, while still in his teens, that he coined the expression.¹

The “sufferative” is therefore “a certain limit in man’s nature, beyond which God will ask nothing further, for He has circumscribed him to this, and if He were to demand more, He would tear His creature apart. [...] It was this limit that Satan could not transgress, otherwise Job would die. It was this limit that God also respected...”² In this sense, Job’s “sufferative” – or his capacity to suffer – was taken to the end; it reached its peak.

Now, “from a certain standpoint, every man, in relation to his own ‘sufferative’ faculty, is a Job. And when it comes to an upright and good man, God makes him suffer to almost the full extent of his ‘sufferative’.”³

The Catholic notion of suffering is incomparable: it was taught by the crucified God Himself, who became sin for us

Crucifixion of Our Lord - Church of the Holy Cross, Kiefersfelden (Germany)



Rufus46 (CC by-sa 3.0)

Antano (CC by-sa 3.0)



Job in misery, by Jean Fouquet - The Hours of Étienne Chevalier, Musée Condé, Chantilly (France)

It was considering the tragic figure of Job that Dr. Plinio created the expression “sufferative”, which describes the human capacity for suffering

people do not suffer; because they do suffer, and suffer a great deal. It is that they end up forming the idea in their minds that it is possible to lead a life without suffering. And then they begin a series of psychological deceptions in order to live as if they were not suffering. Thus a regime of eternal deception is established, a regime of psychological falsification, the effect of which is necessarily a mental imbalance,” because “the happiness of life consists in suffering with measure, number, and weight, in view of a certain end and in undergoing the good suffering that this end justifies.”⁷

And Dr. Plinio concludes: “Do you want a life of hell? I will give you the recipe right away: avoid suffering.”⁸

Suffering is inherent to the human condition

The descriptions in Genesis portray man in Paradise free from any form of pain. No scratches, insomnia or colds threatened him. Not even death frightened him, because the gifts of impassibility and immortality gave Adam and Eve a truly excellent nature.

But there was suffering, according to Dr. Plinio: the state of trial itself.

Of course, the condition of suffering was greatly increased after original sin, but regardless of this, man “was created in a state of trial and it is normal that,

Therefore, He sets such limits so that people can collaborate in the plan of salvation. Of some He says: “Have you noticed my servant Job?” (cf. Job 2:3). And he uses their merits in union with the Most Precious Blood of His Divine Son. Dr. Plinio gives an example: “When in a given country the souls called to this donation give everything, an incense of a pleasing odour rises from that country to the throne of the Most High, which inclines Him to do what they desire.”⁵ There is then “an action on the part of men to deter or advance the divine plan in history, which depends very much on human action... God as it were allows Himself to be conditioned by men.”⁵

A “psychological fraud”: the myth of life without suffering

The “sufferative”, however, is not merely a passive ability, as it might seem at first glance. All people – even those most averse to pain – not only

carry this capacity for suffering in their souls, but they also have, because of it, a real need to suffer, which is co-natural to the human condition.

As Dr. Plinio explains, it is a myth to think that it is possible, on this earth, to organize a life without suffering. This myth is based on ignorance of a fundamental fact, the centre of human psychology: “In every human soul, by virtue of original sin, there is a kind of ‘sufferative’ [...]. That is to say, a sort of need-capacity to suffer which, when it is not exhausted by actual suffering, causes greater frustration and makes us suffer more than would suffering itself. So that, in the final analysis, the least unpleasant way to lead one’s life is still to suffer.”⁶

Such observations seem to shed light on a hundred disorders that afflict contemporary man, so unaccustomed to accepting pain as an unavoidable companion of his earthly existence.

“I think,” continues Dr. Plinio, “that one of the profound reasons for modern disorders is not so much that



A mother at her child's bedside, by Albert Anker

as a result, there should be something in the depths of his being that makes him feel obscurely that, if he is not tested, he has not lived. And because of this, he both abhors the trial and feels the need for it.”⁹

Dr. Plinio then asks whether Adam and Eve, and even the Angels themselves, were aware of the imminence of the trial. And he answers that, if they had known about it, “they would have wanted the time to come, so that in the pain of the trial – it would not be a trial if there were no pain to be accepted – they could reach the perfection of order required of them to be what they should be.”¹⁰ For Dr. Plinio,¹¹ the trial of the Angels, for example, was essential for the angelic spirits to acquire the degree of perfection for which they had been created.

The reasons provided above would be enough to demonstrate the mistake, unfortunately so widespread today, of an education given outside the perspective of suffering. How many parents – to mention only family life – could avoid immense frustration for their children if they did not foster false illusions about the difficulties

*“When we love
someone very much,
we take a virtuous
kind of pleasure in
sacrificing for their
benefit something
that means a lot to us”*

and hardships that are inevitable in human existence.

Love and the cross

Since we are heirs of original sin and bearers of actual guilt, our “sufferative” – to now freely use the term coined by Dr. Plinio – has an expiatory and reparatory character. But there is yet another aspect that needs to be emphasized.

Those who love the good suffer. And they suffer “as a generous, disinterested proof of love for God, because there is no manifestation of love without suffering.”¹²

We know, then, that the Divine Redeemer’s atoning sufferings – the greatest proof of love He could offer us – served to redeem all of humanity. They therefore had a reparatory character par excellence and signified the culmination of God’s love, an incomprehensible, disproportionate, immeasurable love for His poor creatures.

This is very much the “sacrificial character” of suffering, symbolized in the burnt offerings of the Old Law: “When we love someone very much, we take a kind of pleasure – an upright, virtuous pleasure, consistent with the good order of things – in sacrificing for their benefit something that means a lot to us.”¹³

Who does not admire the conduct of a family man who works hard to provide for his children and his wife? And who is not moved by the sight of a good mother who sacrifices her sleep at the bedside of a sick child, completely forgetful of herself and willing to make any sacrifice for the sake of her little one? Such examples help us to realize that even the ordinary events of everyday life can be adorned with notes of nobility and heroism, as long as we know how to lovingly embrace the cross that God places on our shoulders.

How much and how to suffer?

If running away from suffering is a grave mistake, so is running after it without a measure of prudence. As we seek to fulfil our duties as parents, children, religious, teachers, students, spouses – whatever our state – the Lord will send us suffering in the proportion necessary for our sanctification. The God who wounds, cares for the wound (cf. Job 5:18). In other words: He sends the illness and prepares the sick bed.

To suffer with a Catholic spirit is to have a trusting heart and know how to rejoice in consolations, like true children of God. Family life, the licit pleasures of the senses, the beauty of

nature and the spiritual attractions of art are all smiles from the Creator to comfort souls in this vale of tears.

Above all, although God's specific designs are mysterious to us, by understanding the higher reasons for everything that happens on our earthly journey, we will end up seeing our sorrows as a source of happiness.

There is great wisdom in the acceptance of suffering. And we are not referring mainly to the big sufferings. Restricting what one eats, not wanting to be admired, silently accepting small humiliations, not always seeking the greatest comfort, making certain physical efforts that are not strictly necessary... how much we would grow if we made good use of these occasions to mortify our egoism!

However, many run away from the beneficial suffering of a little meditation, of freeing themselves from the rush to get a few minutes of silence that quickly become so delightful. Others

escape pain through a "systematic optimism" and live as if evil and error did not exist, their lack of insight and lucidity reaching the point of what Dr. Plinio did not hesitate to call "mental obesity".¹⁴ Still others, at home or at school, fail in the sacred mission of teaching because they follow the principle that one should never cause others to suffer, and they thereby abandon salutary discipline and exigency...

Ask for the grace to suffer

In short, suffering well confers nobility and assures oxygen for virtue, orders the mind and inspires good temper and humour, gives meaning to life, repairs our offences, restores innocence,

allows us to show our love, obtains graces for the Mystical Body of Christ and moves the history of humanity.

Let us flee from this great modern sham: the myth of earthly happiness free from sorrow and struggle.

And we conclude with this beautiful reflection by Dr. Plinio: "If someone wants to have an idea of how much God loves him, he should measure it by the amount of suffering he receives. And if he receives little, he should say to Our Lady: 'My Mother, I am insignificant, I am feeble, but in the measure of my weakness, do not forget me. Because who knows what accounts I will have to render to thy Divine Son, if I live forever without suffering.'"¹⁵ ✠

Suffering well confers nobility, orders the mind, gives meaning to life, repairs our offences, restores innocence and allows us to show our love



St. Therese of the Child Jesus in August of 1897

Reproduction

¹ In a conference on May 23, 1964, Dr. Plinio justified the choice of the term "sufferative" because of its phonetic similarity to the word "cogitative", the power of the soul dealt with by St. Thomas Aquinas in the context of what is now considered his knowledge theory, responsible for grasping non-sensible objects, such as the useful or the harmful.

² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 30/4/1995.

³ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁴ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁵ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁶ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 23/5/1964.

⁷ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁸ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 26/2/1986.

¹⁰ Idem, *ibidem*.

¹¹ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 30/10/1974.

¹² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 23/5/1964.

¹³ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 3/7/1982.

¹⁴ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 23/5/1964.

¹⁵ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 21/1/1970.

Called to Be Co-redemptors!

Does the God-Man need collaborators to complete His Passion? Can we really console Him in His sorrows, even though living centuries after His Ascension into Heaven?



✠ Sr. Maria Teresa Aquino

It was 1177. Before the Battle of Montgisard, the sublime gesture of a certain king comforted Our Lord Jesus Christ and obtained the victory for the Christians.

When the enemy army came into view, Baldwin IV did not fear in the face of the terrible and obvious disproportion of forces: one crusader to more than a hundred Mohammedans. He was only sixteen years old, and at that young age he was already consumed by leprosy. He dismounted from his horse and prostrated himself with his face to the ground, at the foot of the relic of the true Cross that preceded his warriors, to implore the Saviour's protection. When he arose, everyone saw

that his face, swollen by the disease, was bathed in tears.¹

On learning of this fact, Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira commented: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, nailed to the Cross, had full knowledge of the future. And in the midst of the countless sorrows that this future caused Him, He knew what was to be the destination of each fragment of that Cross that He was making sacred by His Sacrifice. [...] The Divine 'Leper' [...] foresaw that one of the fragments of that Cross would be adored by a leprous son in the desert. [...] He saw that man's 'angelic' adoration and was consoled. [...] Baldwin drew something akin to a smile from the poor 'leprous' lips of Our Lord as He expired."²

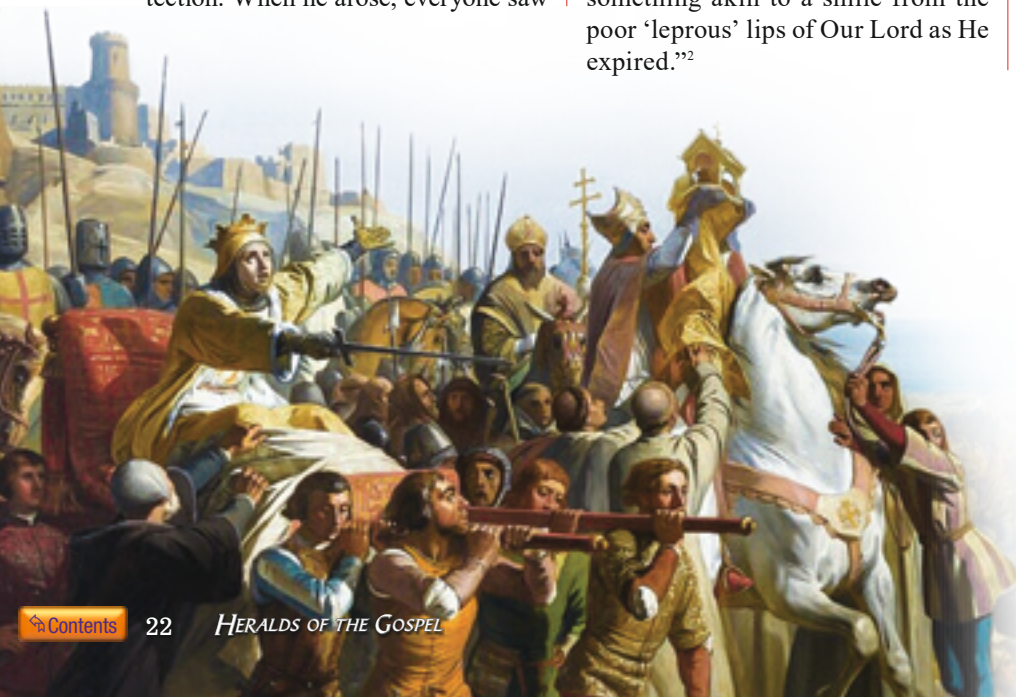
Let us leave this poignant scene at a standstill and turn our attention to another one – no longer on an arena of war, but on a different battlefield: that of a monastery.

Sister Josefa Menéndez, who lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was a soul favoured by frequent visions of Our Lord. On one of these occasions, He showed the seer His Divine Heart with three new wounds, and explained that He had come to ask her, through sacrifices and prayers, to give Him back three priests who had abandoned Him. The nun spent days immersed in great suffering and offered everything to win back those souls.³

If we meditate a little on these two episodes, some questions are bound to arise in our souls, such as whether the sufferings endured by the God-Man were insufficient, in such a way so that He would need collaborators throughout history to complete His redemptive Sacrifice. And can we really console Him in His Passion, even though we

**From the height of the Cross,
Our Lord saw and was consoled
by Baldwin's act of adoration
before the battle**

"Battle of Montgisard",
by Charles-Philippe Larivière -
Palace of Versailles (France)



live centuries after His Ascension into Heaven?

Called to be co-redemptors

When we look at the lives of the saints, we can see how the Kingdom of Heaven is populated by men and women of all races, nations, languages and ages. During their life on this earth they were nobles or humble servants; some of them endowed with unspeakable wisdom, others almost ignorant. The magnificent garden of the Lord, in the beautiful expression of St. Augustine,⁴ is composed not only of the roses of the martyrs, but also the lilies of the virgins, the ivy of married persons, the violet of the widows; and in this diversity we find a common denominator that no blessed person lacked: a love of suffering.

Each in their own time, according to their state, their vocation, their charisms and gifts, followed Our Lord's command with complete fidelity: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Lk 9:23). And now they can be recognized by the illustrious title of *co-redemptor*.

Co-redemptor? Yes – it is no exaggeration! – and this does not just apply to those who are already part of the Church Glorious, but it is an invitation to each and every one of us. In his work *Jesucristo y la vida cristiana*, Fr. Royo Marín⁵ discusses this topic with his characteristic clarity and simplicity, as we will see below.

The priesthood of every baptized person requires sacrifice

The essential act of every priest is sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the High and Eternal Priest, exercised it by immolating Himself on the altar of the Cross; His ministers, priests by participating in His priesthood

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God desires that all the baptized, through their afflictions, complete the salvific mission of the Word Incarnate

Sister Josefa Menéndez

through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, fulfil this function primarily in the Eucharistic Celebration, which is the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary. And how does this happen with the rest of the faithful who, in some way, also share in Christ's priesthood through Baptism?

Just as God entrusted mankind with the mission of completing the beauties of creation, without this allowing us to conclude that they were poorly made, He also desires that the baptized, through their sufferings, complete the saving mission of the Incarnate Word, according to the words of St. Paul: "in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His Body, that is, the Church" (Col 1:24).

The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ has infinite merits and is entirely sufficient to redeem the whole human race. In this respect, no one can add anything to it. But out of unspeakable goodness, the Saviour "wills to be helped [...] in carrying out the work of

Redemption"⁶ and He therefore invites the baptized to pay a portion of this ransom.

"In my flesh I complete"

This *completion* of the Passion can happen in two ways:

Firstly, by *applying the merits of the Passion*. Our Lord entrusted the immense treasure of the Redemption to the Church, and to distribute it He wants not only His Divine Bride's participation, but also the contribution of the baptized: "the salvation of many depends on the prayers and voluntary penances that the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ offer for this intention."⁷

Moreover, through the *sufferings of the members of the Mystical Body themselves*. When Jesus offered Himself as a victim on Calvary, He did so as the Head of His Mystical Body, presenting all the other members to the Father, and for this reason His Passion continues in them throughout the ages. "He contemplated us at every moment of our lives; He knew our actions, our resolutions, our faults, our prayers. Nothing escaped His gaze. [...] Jesus Christ, our adorable Head, was consoled and sustained by the sight of all His members, who over the centuries would collaborate in His sufferings. In this intimacy of thought with all of us, He suffered His horrendous martyrdom. [...] For God, before whom everything appears as an eternal present, the homage of the holy Victim was compounded by all the atonements of the future."⁸

No suffering has sanctifying power on its own. On Calvary, in addition to the Redeemer, there were two other condemned men, and we know the blasphemous attitude displayed by the bad thief (cf. Lk 23:39). If we look around us, we see suffering everywhere, but this does not mean that the

world is full of saints. The only pain capable of sanctifying is that borne patiently out of love for God and in union with the infinite merits of Our Lord. Unfortunately, countless souls are unaware of the value and sublimity of pain faced in this way!

“For the sake of His Body, that is, the Church”

In the natural body, each part aims at the well-being of the whole; in the Holy Church, in a similar and more sublime way, there is also a mutual dependence among the members. This is what is known as the Communion of Saints: the merit acquired by one member enriches the whole Church and, *contrario sensu*, every grace that is impeded in some part of this Mystical Body affects it as a whole.

God gives everyone the necessary means to reach Heaven. However, He often makes the superabundant graces – which give these means their effectiveness – conditional on the co-operation of the merits of others.⁹ In this sense, we can be an occasion of grace for others, but we must also be open to the graces that God wants to grant us through the intercessors that He Himself places in our path.

It is also for this reason that the acts and, above all, the sufferings of each baptized person, when offered in union with the infinite merits of Christ’s Passion, can have expiatory value for their

own sins and co-redemptive value to assist the other members of the Mystical Body. And it is in this way that one can truly console Our Lord in His

pours a drop of water into the chalice of wine, as required by the rubrics. Among other symbolisms, this drop represents human suffering united to that of the God-Man. And to this apostolate we are all called! Therefore let us be generous and unite our sufferings, together with Our Lady’s tears, to the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, so that the Passion can be fully effective for souls.

To do this, we do not need to go in search of sufferings. Pain knocks at our doors all the time; we just have to accept it with peace of mind and take every opportunity to offer God the small sacrifices of daily life. In this sense, Dr. Plinio’s advice is precious:

“When, for example, I have an unpleasant and tedious task to do, and I do not feel like doing it, if it is my duty, I do it and with élan! [...] But if I have a pleasant task to do, I should never give it preference: I should let the impetus pass first and do it later. [...] Someone will say: ‘But, Dr. Plinio, that is such a small thing!’ I reply: ‘To do many small things like that is immense! And do them we must!’”¹⁰

Let us ask Our Lady, *Virgo Fidelis*, to make us faithful to the crosses that Providence sends us, carrying out our mission as co-redemptors with generosity. In this way, we will reciprocate the boundless love of which we were the object in the Passion, and we will contribute to the full realization of all its effects. ✠



Our sufferings, when offered in union with the infinite merits of Christ’s Passion, can acquire atoning and co-redemptive value

Christ crucified and St. Francis of Assisi – Milk Grotto, Bethlehem (Israel)

sufferings and help Him in the salvation of souls.

The apostolate to which we are all called

Thus, we have in our hands a real weapon of conquest! Let us be sure to use it well! At Holy Mass, the priest

¹ Cf. BORDONOVE, Georges. *Les Croisades et le Royaume de Jérusalem*. Paris: Pygmalion Gérard Watelet, 2002, p.281.

² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conférence*. São Paulo, 21/10/1972.

³ Cf. MENÉNDEZ, RSCJ, Josefá. *Apelo ao amor*. 3.ed. Rio

de Janeiro: Editora Rio-São Paulo, 1963, p.166-183.

⁴ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *Sermo CCCIV*, c.2: PL 38, 1396.

⁵ Cf. ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *Jesucristo y la vida cristiana*. Madrid: BAC, 1961, p.573-581.

⁶ PIUS XII. *Mystici Corporis Christi*, n.44.

⁷ Idem, ibidem.

⁸ GRIMAUD. *Ély nosotros: un solo Cristo*, apud ROYO MARÍN, op. cit., p.574.

⁹ Cf. PLUS, Raúl. *Cristo en nuestros prójimos*, apud ROYO MARÍN, op. cit., p.577.

¹⁰ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Termômetro do verdadeiro fervor [Thermometer of True Fervour]. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XXVI. N.306 (Sept., 2023); p.31-32. See the transcript of the article in the section *A Prophet for Our Times* in this magazine.



A Human Necessity

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§1505 By His Passion and Death on the Cross, Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to Him and unite us with His redemptive Passion.

There are people for whom the least annoyance is a disaster. Our adorable Lord Jesus, however, elevated the role of suffering in human life to unimaginable heights, because He made it a means for man to fulfil his purpose on this earthly journey: to become conformed to Christ, our Redeemer, Model and Guide.

Some people mistakenly think that suffering entered the world only as a consequence of original sin. It is true that we go through a great deal of anguish due to the fault of our first parents (cf. Gn 3:16-19)... However, far beyond this contingency, difficulties constitute, in the many paradoxical situations in which they present themselves, a necessity for the full development of the intelligent creature in a state of trial. And to these two factors are added, finally, the contempt, insults and setbacks orchestrated by the prince of darkness and his cohorts (cf. 1 Pt 5:8), in their hatred of those who observe the divine Commandments.

There are therefore three sources of tribulation for the faithful: the consequences of original sin, the state of trial of this mortal life and diabolical or human wickedness.

How can we withstand so much adversity? Are we just born to embrace a meaningless existence? Teaching “the science of holiness,” Bishop Josep Torras i Bages of Vic, who died at the beginning of the 20th century, em-



Francisco Lecaros

Someone who had never known pain would not know life, for suffering is an essential part of it

St. Bernard with the instruments of the Passion

phasized that “sufferings and setbacks are such an intimate ingredient in this earthly life that without them it becomes tiresome and even unbearable,” because “suffering teaches; and anyone who does not experience it would not know life in all its reality, because suffering is an essential part of it.”¹

In the Grotto of Bethlehem and on Golgotha, God’s immeasurable affection for us shines through. He becomes

small and is born of the Immaculate Virgin; however, His journey through the streets and roads of the Holy Land has one goal: the Cross! And the mishaps, struggles and difficulties we go through are a powerful aid in configuring us to the loving Heart of the suffering Jesus. In fact, the Heavenly Father wants us to be like His Son, collaborators in the building up of the Holy Church and in the salvation of souls.

Let us allow the Divine Goldsmith to carefully polish us so that, like a small drop of water united to the Precious Blood of Jesus, we can arrive purified in eternal glory, as the Saint of the Little Way reminds us: “Holiness does not consist in saying beautiful things, it does not even consist in thinking them, in feeling them!... it consists in *suffering* and in suffering *from everything*. Holiness! You have to conquer it at the point of the sword, you have to *suffer*... you have to *agonize*!...” A day will come when the shadows will disappear, then only joy, inebriation will remain... Let us take advantage of our unique moment of suffering!... let us see only each moment!... a moment is a treasure...² ✠

¹ TORRAS I BAGES, Josep. La ciència del patir. In: *Obres completes*. Barcelona: Abadia de Montserrat, 1989, v.VI, p.400-401.

² ST. THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS. *Letter 89*. To Celine, 26/4/1889.



Thermometer of True Fervour

The soul who is firmly resolved to embrace duty without wavering, even when it entails all kinds of difficulties and sufferings – only such a soul is truly fervent.

✠ Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

In one of the houses in our movement, there is a very beautiful photograph of a tree-lined promenade. It is by no means as lush as those at Fontainebleau forest, but it is a beautiful arboreal path, dignified, well-arranged and pleasing to the eye. There are a few stone benches without backrests on either side of the walkway, inviting you to sit under the shade dappled by the sun's rays. It is a long, straight trail, and you cannot see the end of it.

I have the impression that it is a walkway from the convent of Lisieux, where St. Therese of the Child Jesus wrote part of the *Story of a Soul*.

How enchanting it is to think of St. Therese writing her own story in her tiny handwriting, dressed in her Carmelite habit and sitting in the rays of sunlight shining through that canopy, and at one point to hear her exclaim: "How sweet religious life is!"

The most curious thing is that it is indeed sweet – it alone has sweetness, and sweetness that life in the world does not have – but if we remembered how much Our Lady asked of St. Therese in terms of suffering and how much she gave, then we would understand the battle that religious life entails.

Atoning victim for the merciful love of God

St. Therese received an invitation from grace to be an expiatory victim for God's merciful love. Mindful that God's love was so little understood and so little loved by people, she wanted to offer reparation that would first and foremost console the Most High, but that would also have the merit of atoning for those who did not respond with fervour to the vocations they had received and to the movements of God's love towards them.

In order to ensure that the Lord would not punish this rejection of His love – because such an attitude is an insult to Him – Divine Providence chose a cohort of victim souls who would offer themselves on earth and, in consideration of them, He gave even more gifts to call other souls.

The formula for St. Therese's sacrifice was: never ask God for anything and never refuse anything; to accept whatever happens. Anything that God allowed to befall her she would consent to it and not become distraught. And with this, she offered one, two, even twenty sacrifices, which she called "small", because they were not as heroic as those of St. Mary of Egypt – a Saint who made so many heroic sacrifices that in the last century they

stopped printing her biography because it horrified souls...

The Saint of the Little Way accepted all the sacrifices allowed by Providence. One day, for example, a nun who was helping her fix part of her habit was clumsy and stuck a pin in her flesh. St. Therese spent the whole day with that pin stuck in her because, God having allowed it, she was not going to take it out. In this way, she offered herself as a victim to God's merciful love.

Small sacrifices and the great trial

Another day, I can imagine, she was writing her autobiography and, at the moment when her mind was most focused, another nun suddenly came up to her and said:

"Oh, Sister Therese, since you are writing so well, I am going to rob a little bit of your time. Can we talk? I am very upset and I need some consolation..."

"Oh, of course!" – St. Therese would reply.

The conversation lasted an hour... At a certain point, the bell sounded for the meal – a meagre Carmelite lunch – and everyone headed for the refectory. The rest of the day went according to plan, and the *Story of a Soul* was left for the next day. In everything, she did the opposite of what she would have wanted, because it was her way of of-



Life is full of great sufferings, whether in religious life or outside of it, and therefore any piety that is not accompanied by courage in the face of suffering is not true piety

At left, the avenue of chestnut trees at the Convent of Lisieux (France), with the chair used by St. Therese of the Child Jesus in the final months of her life. At right, a portrait of the Saint taken in July of 1897

fering a sacrifice to God's merciful love. And if that were all!

One night she expectorated and used her handkerchief. She really wanted to know if she had expelled blood – a precursor to hemoptysis and a harbinger of death – but, in order to offer her sacrifice and mortify herself, she did not turn on the light. The next day, when dawn broke, St. Therese realized that death was near and would finally set her free. It was tuberculosis that was knocking at her door, at a time when there were not the thousand remedies that are available today.

Shortly afterwards, the trial against faith began, the terrible temptation of the saints. She died in tremendous aridity, but this phrase was very characteristic of her state of mind: "I believe, only and exclusively because I want to believe!" She believed because she loved! After a tremendous agony, she had an ecstasy and died. An inexplicable perfume of violets began to emanate from her body and spread throughout the whole convent. It was the glorification of the one who had opened up the Little Way for little souls. What a martyrdom! What an extraordinary thing!

Life is full of great sufferings! How can we face them and be ready for them when they come? They are those colossal waves that come crashing down on everyone. There is no one who does not suffer greatly in religious life and outside of it. Sometimes more inside than outside, sometimes more outside than inside.

How, then, should we consider the role of suffering?

The proof of fervour is courage in suffering!

The soul who has made the resolution to suffer and is willing to face anything, no matter what, in the worst difficulty and in the dark, determined to reach the final consequences of tribulation if need be, but to embrace duty without hesitation, thinking that life is thus well spent, because that is how it should be and that is how it wants it to be, that is a fervent soul!

If the soul is terrified of tribulation, prefers to joke around, wishes to be funny, entertaining, liked by everyone, to lead a soft life, and is alarmed by any suffering; such a soul can have an ecstasy – which would be a false one – in front of a crucifix or an image

of Our Lady to the point of writhing around, but I do not take them seriously, because the proof of fervour is courage in suffering. And any piety that is not accompanied by courage in suffering is a sham.

We have to take a long, hard look at ourselves and understand this: good resolutions made in ordinary life are often not enough. We can, for example, make the resolution: "I wish, O Lady, Queen of Heaven and Earth, to suffer everything possible in the eventuality of great sorrows. And I now give myself entirely!" That is an excellent disposition! But there will come times when the pain is such that we might say: "My Mother, I did not think the suffering would be so great and I do not think I will be able to endure it!"

The true Catholic can bear anything! For a very simple reason: when he asks, he always has God's grace with him. It is understandable that a man's natural strength does not offer the resources to cope. But where nature is weak, grace is strong. If one prays, Our Lady will give the necessary strength and, when the time of struggle comes, the temptation will be met head on.

The soul must trust that its capacity to suffer goes much further than the extent of its personality. His situation resembles that of a man who, in order to glorify Our Lady, has to meet a lion along the road and strangle it. He looks at his hands and says: “The lion will devour them and me too! I am not capable of giving him a pinch or even a swipe on his mane, and I am supposed to strangle him! Me? Never!” This person is a failure.

For the fervent soul, the case is put another way: “If this is my duty, and my dedication to the Holy Catholic Church leads me to that point, I will say to Our Lady: Give me graces to endure and I will make it there! ‘*Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*,’ says St. Paul, ‘I can do all things in Him who strengthens me’ (Phil 4:13). Our Lord’s strength, obtained through Our Lady’s prayers – which He never denies – will give me strength. At the H-hour, I will be strong!” That is fervour!

To sacrifice many small things is immense in God’s eyes

However, fervour is not only reserved for grand occasions. Anyone who does not have it on lesser occasions is not ready to receive the grace of fervour on grand occasions. And for that, one must be used to making the sacrifices of daily life with this fervour.

When, for example, I have an unpleasant and tedious task to do, and I do not feel like doing it, if it is my duty, I do it and with élan! Then I have fervour.

I can leave an unpleasant task to be done in half an hour, but I will do it now! I must have “gluttony” for sacrifice! And I should not linger idly in the face of a sacrifice that I do not have the courage to make, big or small, it does not matter. Today, at some point, I have to make a bothersome phone call; I have just wo-

ken up, so I am going to do it now! I am going to seize this little task with zeal and say: “Come here, telephone, symbol of progress and my servant. My first battle will be through you!”

The sacrifices, I must make them immediately. But if I have a pleasant task to do, I should never give it prefer-



In order to receive the grace of fervour on the great occasions, we must have it in the small ones, carrying out the sacrifices of daily life

Dr. Plinio in August of 1991

ence: I should let the impetus pass first and do it later.

In the same way, if I am very keen to hear the repercussions of the apostolate from a member of our movement who has just arrived from a trip – which lasted months – I plan to go downstairs straight away to talk to him. Suddenly I stop and remember to offer Our Lady a sacrifice. I walk slowly down the steps and, with each step, I say an ejaculatory prayer. What for? To torment myself? No! To conquer a little more ground of the cursed, gnostic and egalitarian Revolution. When I arrive downstairs,

I will have lost a bit of news, it is true, but I will have gained much ground for Mary Most Holy, who will know what to do with my offering as I slowly descend the staircase. And I know that, on every step, my Angel will accompany me smiling!

I ask you: is there a sweeter staircase in the world to descend? That is what fervour is all about! Someone will say: “But, Dr. Plinio, that is such a small thing!” I reply: “To do many small things like that is immense! And do them we must!”

There are therefore a thousand occasions to make sacrifices, both small and large, which increase our fervour. The peak of fervour is reached when, at the height of torment and suffering, at a certain moment a person says: “Everything is done, *consummatum est!*”

St. Paul, a fervent soul

Look at the beautiful symbolism of St. Paul’s martyrdom. He was the Apostle who worked hardest to spread the Gospel. Before he was beheaded, he declared: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course I should have finished. Now, Lord, give me the reward of your glory” (cf. 2 Tm 4:7-8).

When the Roman executioner raised his sword and cut off his head, it struck the ground three times, such was the violence of the blow. At each point where it struck, a fountain sprang up. Such is the sacrifice of a fervent man!

We may feel that something has been decapitated in us during the great sacrifices of our lives, but let us remember the fountains that will spring up through these sacrifices! ✠

Taken, with minor adaptations, from: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XXVI. N.306 (Sept., 2023), p.29-32



Is it Lawful to Ask God to Remove Suffering from Us?

Payer is the interpreter of our desires before God (cf. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.83, a.9). But is it right to yearn to be free from the sufferings of this life, which Providence has allowed for our good? Should not our prayers be raised to the throne of the Divine Majesty only to ask to be able to accept the cross with resignation? Or is it permissible to beseech consolation, healing and favours?

Devotion consists not only in offering God the reverence of our dedication or in thanking Him for the benefits we have received, but also in expressing our needs with filial trust: “Prayer is offered up to God, not that we may bend Him, but that we may excite in ourselves the confidence to ask: which confidence is excited in us chiefly by the consideration of His charity in our regard, whereby He wills our good – wherefore we say: ‘Our Father’” (ad 5).

We should not be afraid to present our desires and needs to God with confidence, because through the gift of sanctifying grace we share in the divine nature (2 Pt 1:4) and we are children! There is therefore nothing improper about asking for the alleviation, shortening or elimination of our sufferings, if we pray to Him conditionally and in submission to His holy will.

We find an absolute and perfect example of this principle in the Divine Master. Shortly before His Passion, Jesus raised a poignant prayer to Heaven: “Father, if Thou art willing,

remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done” (Lk 22:42). This is the plea of the Only-begotten Son, who does not hide His pain, but above all wants to fulfil the Father’s plan.

As the Angelic Doctor explains, Christ prayed expressing His human sensibility in order to instruct us on three points: “First, to show that He had taken a true human nature, with all its natural affections: secondly, to show that a man may wish with his natural desire what God does not wish: thirdly, to show that man should subject his own will to the Divine will. Hence Augustine says: ‘Christ acting as a man, shows the proper will of a man when He says: Let this chalice pass from Me; for this was the human will desiring something proper to itself and, so to say, private. But because He wishes man to be righteous and to be directed to God, He adds: Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt, as if to say: See thyself in Me, for Thou canst desire something proper to Thee, even though God wishes something else’” (III, q.21, a.2).

In the light of Christ’s example in the Garden of Olives, and in harmony with Thomistic doctrine, Msgr. João also teaches how legitimate it is to pray to God to deliver us from suffering, if the request is submitted to God’s will with love and abandonment: “It was fitting that Our Lord prayed to give me an example of perfect prayer, which

must be humble, filial, full of trust and persevering. He had announced several times that He would be killed and would rise again, so He knew well that that conditional prayer would not be answered. However, He prayed it to show that He is truly Man and that it is permissible for human beings to express their pain. What a magnificent example Our Lord Jesus Christ gives me! This is how I should pray: ‘If it be possible...’”¹ ✠

¹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Meditation*. São Paulo, 16/10/1992.



Our Lord’s prayer in the Garden of Olives is a perfect example of a supplication that expresses pain, but above all, the desire to fulfil the Father’s plan

“The Agony in the Garden”, by Andrea di Vanni - National Gallery of Art, Washington DC



When Calamities Teach Humanity

In anguish, the hand of God is no less evident than in times of consolation. However, we often forget that behind misfortunes lies hidden divine mercy.

✎ Marcos Vinícius Santos



There are several ways to read a book. In one of them, a person understands the meaning of the sentences, the simple combination of words, phrases and paragraphs almost mathematically, experiencing a brief dose of impressions that the plot may arouse. When talking to a reader like this, we will notice a shallow analysis of the facts. Why? Considering a second type of reading will give us the answer.

This way is characterized by a careful examination of the text, not just of the lines, but of what is between the lines, trying to fit the episodes described into a broader perspective. Among such readers we find good observers, the learned, the critics and, above all, the men of faith. The latter

have the sharpest interpretation of the facts, because they analyse them from a supernatural perspective, trying to understand the events from God's viewpoint.

In fact, the Divine Writer usually sends signs, as if between the lines, before writing certain pages of history, so that men, by “reading” the events that surround them, can discern in them a heavenly warning, and not a mere series of coincidences.

This is what happened in Europe during the decades preceding one of the greatest tragedies humanity has ever known: the Black Death.¹

Some coincidences...

In 1315, a comet streaked across the sky, leaving in its trail the feeling

that something dreadful was imminent. When harvest time arrived, the bad omen seemed to come true. The autumn of 1315 began with a period of severe drought and other terrible weather conditions, which contributed to the ruin of the crops for two subsequent years.

The food scarcity began a time of distressing famine for Europeans, in which frightening scenes took place: crazed by hunger, some peasants began to gnaw on the bark of trees, in the illusion that they would thus be able to satisfy themselves; others, driven by a more violent delirium, went so far as to placate their desperate appetite by practising cannibalism. This horrific situation was further accentuated by the appearance of the children,

Ships from the East were the means of transportation for the disease that proliferated throughout Europe, killing millions of people

Port of Genoa in the late Middle Ages



victims of malnutrition and reduced to skeletons.

Four years later, when the wounds of the famine had barely begun to heal, another tragedy evoked the events that preceded the departure of the chosen people from Egypt: a furious cloud of locusts of unknown origin took over the scene.

The insatiable insects swept away all the crops they found in their path. The method of advance always followed the same order: a small detachment would approach to reconnoitre the area to be the target of the attack; once the sweep was complete, this group would return to the swarm, which would soon return in full force. Anyone who saw the first insects swarming their lands would have little more than two hours to protect themselves.

But what threat did these small invertebrates pose to make people fear them so much? It was not – and is not! – something normal. These locusts seemed to be prefigures of the Apocalyptic ones described by St. John (cf. Rv 9:3-11). And if the reader thinks this supposition is exaggerated, consider the fate of an unsuspecting squire who, while traveling on horseback, was caught unprepared by the immense shadow of the insects. The result became known later: all that remained of the poor man was his skeleton, piled up next to the bones of his animal. But the calamities did not stop there.

Years later, in 1325, astronomers observed a peculiar conjunction between Jupiter and Saturn, which was recorded not only with curiosity, but also with a certain air of alert. In 1341 there was a total solar eclipse, which left thousands of people immersed in darkness. In those days, celestial signs still moved souls. Even though some unbelievers supported the naturalist claim that it was nothing more than a predictable phenomenon without any major significance, the disappearance



Photos: Reproduction

Contagion was rapid and the disease worked its damage swiftly and silently; the victims would survive seventy-two hours, at the very most

The black plague in Florence, by Giovanni Boccaccio - National Library of France; inset: the leather garment worn by medical doctors during the epidemic, along with a beak-shaped mask filled with aromatic herbs

of the Sun and the momentary darkness in certain regions necessarily brought a premonition regarding the end of time.

The sky having spoken, it was now the earth's turn: the year 1348 "began with a series of earthquakes of unprecedented force, which shook all of Europe and killed thousands and thousands of people under the collapsed houses [...]. For several months a thick and heavy fog hung over Greece; England, from June to December, was flooded with almost uninterrupted rains."²

In France, the economic situation accompanied the natural disasters. A sharp inflation during the reign of Philip the Fair increased the tension that already existed due to the wars from which the country had not yet recovered. In the social sphere, the state of affairs was even more distressing. Historians point to a serious drop in the general birth rate, beginning at the close of the 13th century. Among other reasons, the demographic decline was caused by a wave of violence arising from various internal and external conflicts.

Europe seemed to be heading, at a rapid pace, towards its own extinction.

Tragedies also in the spiritual order

Astronomical and telluric phenomena, plagues and famines, social calamities and political conflicts... None of these, however, were as devastating as the juncture at which the Mystical Body of Christ found itself. In fact, all of these elements were but a symbol of what was happening in the spiritual order at the end of the Middle Ages.

As an example, let us recall that the 14th century began with the outrageous attack at Anagni, a direct affront by the envoys of the French monarch against Pope Boniface VIII, in 1303. Shortly thereafter, in 1309, the Papacy moved to Avignon, where it would remain until 1377, beginning the "Babylonian captivity," in the expression used by several historians. Finally, the end of the century would witness one of the greatest internal dissensions seen in Church history: the great Western schism, in which Christianity was divided under the leadership of three "popes."

→

This sombre scenario of past catastrophes and future upheavals will have its denouement in the great scourge of 1348, as the conclusion of one era and the preface to another.

It all begins in the East

The reader should have in mind the scene that heralds the arrival of a great *tsunami*. Before bursting over its boundaries, the sea first recedes extensively, as if gathering strength to throw itself inland. Similarly, the wave that would sweep away millions of lives across Europe would begin its sinister career in the lands of the East and would grow in strength as it approached Europe.

The strange illness which first left China, then known as *Katay*, travelled on through Armenia, India and Persia. In Syria, the power of the infection grew, reaching fifteen thousand deaths a day in Cairo and twenty thousand in Gaza. Ships travelling from the eastern seas were the fatal means of transporting the disease to the harbours of Genoa and Sicily, from where it spread

across the European continent, from Russia to Greenland.

The aversion caused by the symptoms manifested in the sick, coupled with the speed of their ensuing death, moved the entire population to seek some way to halt this demonic scourge. Some began to employ scrupulous hygiene methods, avoiding the slightest contact with anyone who showed signs of the disease. Others flocked to churches to beg Heaven for mercy. However, “neither the hygienic measures nor the public prayers were enough to stop it.”³

The devastation

The unfortunate sufferer of the disease would feel tumours growing under their arms, and soon their whole body would be overcome by repulsive eruptions. Another obvious symptom was the appearance of the black spots that gave the plague its name. In both cases, the progression was swift and silent, often not even causing a fever. In the best-case scenario, seventy-two hours were enough to kill the unfortunate victim.

The contagion was fulminating: a sick person’s clothing transmitted the plague to anyone who touched them. People avoided greeting one another, the dying languished without company. Port cities such as the majestic Ven-

ice, which possessed one of the largest maritime fleets in the West, were hit hardest because they were the first to receive the impact of the epidemic.

French cities took a large part in the continent’s woes: “In Avignon, from January 25 to April 27, 1348, there were sixty-two thousand victims, half the population; and when there was no more room for graves, the Pope authorized burials in the pontifical cemetery, where eleven thousand corpses were buried in March and April.”⁴

Of the one hundred and forty families that made up the village of Soisy-sur-Seine, only six remained at the end of the plague. Seventeen thousand deaths were recorded in Amiens.

To summarize: historians estimate that there were no less than twenty-five million dead in Europe and thirty-six million in Asia. These figures, which are already terrifying if considered within the context of the gigantic world population of today, meant far more at that time. Imagine that this scourge took more than a third of the European population then existent ...⁵

God’s hand appears in tribulation

The years marked by pain and death saw various reactions, recorded by historians. Couples living in irregular situations tried to put their lives right. Many who were addicted to gambling exchanged their dice for rosary beads, leaving the tables of fortune to go to the altars. Prayers multiplied and the diligent practice of penance increased everywhere. In the midst of a harsh, cold winter, the widespread threat

The years marked by pain and death witnessed genuine conversions; prayers multiplied and the eagerness for penance augmented

Procession organized by St. Gregory the Great beseeching an end to the plague then devastating Rome - ‘Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry’, Condé Museum, Chantilly (France)



of an almost sudden death caused flowers of springtime faith to sprout.

Indeed, God's hand appears no less in anguish than during times of consolation. Often, however, there is a tendency to hide the need for a real change of life behind an ill-conceived notion of mercy: the devil knows that, during a trial, souls are more apt to raise their intense supplications to the Most High and offer Him the incense of a genuine conversion.

Joy is not always enough to move people to practise virtue. Suffering is therefore salutary, as an incentive to take certain steps along the path of holiness. Was it not Heaven's intention to warn the medieval people of the calamities that would befall all of humanity if they abandoned the fruitful practice of the Catholic Faith that had enlightened the previous centuries?

There is no doubt that the Middle Ages left one of the best memoirs in the pages of history, written by the faithful who resolved to embody the spirit of the Holy Church in their deeds.

The great treatises on theology and philosophy, the universities, the charitable hospitals, the imposing Gothic cathedrals that immortalized the ideal of their builders and so many other achievements of humanity that the modern age boasts are the fruits of this Christian spirit. The artistic production of that era, for example, is an unfailing testimony of its fruitfulness. From 1050 until two years after the



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God presented a remedy, albeit a bitter one, for the decadence that was beginning to undermine a society founded on the Gospel

"Rheims Cathedral", by Domenico Quaglio - Museum of Fine Arts, Leipzig (Germany)

plague, artistic creations multiplied, and many of them are still awaiting a worthy replica.

But if Christendom was responsible for so much historically recognized progress, it was due to the fact that men were concerned with putting their mentality into practice in everyday life. And the medieval attitude towards suffering played an essential role in this process.

There was in that era an awareness that "man is incapable of acquiring any degree of spiritual perfection – even the most modest and elementary degrees – without suffering."⁶

By allowing an entire continent to go through so great a torment as the Black Death, Divine Providence may have been presenting it with a remedy, albeit a bitter one, to cure the decadence that was beginning and which would result in various deviations, along with the gradual deterioration of a society that had originally been built according to evangelical teachings. The emergence of the neo-pagan Renaissance was already imminent...

Those who lived at that time could not excuse themselves by claiming ignorance. If they did not recognize the need for a change of course, all they had to do was stop and analyse the unusual phenomena that preceded the epidemic. These were heralds that proclaimed – without words, it is true, but very clearly – the designs of an outraged

Providence. The prophets of the calamities of those times were these prophetic calamities.

Now, God has not changed, and continues to write as He once did: in lines and between the lines. It is up to us, therefore, to read in the events the warning signs that He sends before consummating great interventions. How many comets have streaked across our 21st century skies? How many times has nature seemed to show man its resentment, whether through water, fire, air or disease? What is God's intention in these momentous emissaries? Let us be vigilant! ✠

¹ The historical information in this article was taken from the following works: WEISS, Johann Baptist. *Historia Universal*. Barcelona: La Educaci3n,

1929, v.VII, p.383-387; DANIEL-ROPS, Henri. *A Igreja das catedrais e das cruzadas*. S3o Paulo: Quadrante, 1993, p.656-665; BONASSIE, Pierre.

Dicion3rio de Hist3ria Medieval. Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 1985, p.169-172.

² WEISS, op. cit., p.385.

³ DANIEL-ROPS, op. cit., p.657.

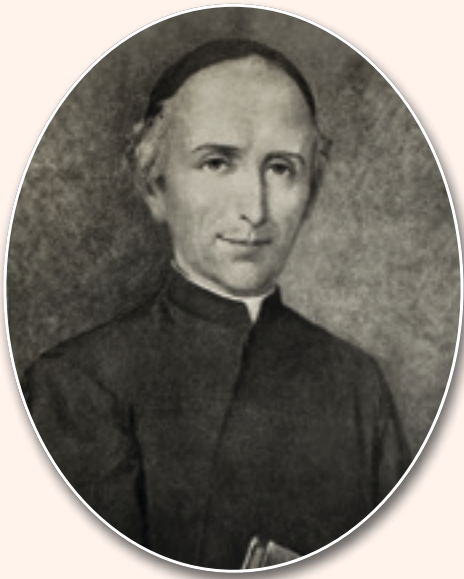
⁴ Idem, p.658.

⁵ Cf. BONASSIE, op. cit., p.170.

⁶ CORR3A DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. S3o Paulo, 16/5/1964.

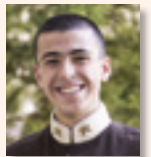


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Cunning as a Serpent...

There was a priest who managed to outwit the imperial police time and time again, and who created a courier system faster than the official one... Who was he?



✠ Thiago Resende

The absence of creativity is one of the most characteristic features of the devil's work. In fact, if you analyse history with a keen eye, you can see how, over the centuries, the onslaughts of the power of darkness against good have been countless, but always similar in their substance and methods. In this endless repetition, the variation in characters and places is nothing more than a deceptive label for content that is usually the same.

Divine works, on the other hand, are marked by a superabundant creativity, the fruit of the infinitude of their Creator. God is par excellence that good father of a family who knows how to bring out new and old things from his treasury (cf. Mt 13:52), and He makes use of the most diverse means in the defence of the Holy Church as well.

Let us focus our attention on one of them, following the story of a young seminarian ardent with zeal for the Catholic cause.

Which path to follow?

Pio Bruno Pancrazio Lanteri was born on May 12, 1759 in Cuneo, a small

town in Piedmont close to France and the gigantic Alps. The son of very pious parents, he received an exemplary religious upbringing from an early age. However, when he was only four years old, his mother died, which is why he would later declare: "I have hardly known any other mother than Mary Most Holy, and in all my life I have received no other affection than from so good a Mother."¹

This heavenly Lady had a great mission in store for him, which Bruno must certainly have sensed. Aged just seventeen, he asked his father for permission to enter the Carthusian monas-

tery. Although he loved his son dearly, the good father knew better than to oppose what seemed to be a divine call. Thus, it was not long before Lanteri entered the monastery.

However, he would soon discover that God had not destined him for the cloister. His weak health did not allow him to endure the rigours of Carthusian life, and the prior of the monastery clearly convinced him that if Providence had not given the young aspirant the means to undertake that path, it was because another was reserved for him.

While recognizing that he did not have the vocation to be a contemplative, Bruno still wanted to do something for the Holy Church. So he asked his bishop to accept him as a postulant to the priesthood, and he was soon admitted. In order to continue his studies, he travelled to Turin and entered university – a praiseworthy move, but one that would bring with it great risk.

On the verge of heresy

Close to France, the city of Turin was infected by the same evil that

*Divine works are
always marked by
a superabundant
creativity and
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of their Artifice*

was running rampant in the kingdom of the *fleur de lis* at the time: Jansenism, which was further aggravated in the Piedmontese domains by a latent atmosphere of opposition between the civil government and the Holy See. The rigorist heresy, full of bitterness, permeated large portions of the ecclesiastical environment, making it difficult for a seminarian to be properly formed.

The danger was all the greater the more widely these deviations were publicized through a poorly governed press, to the great detriment of the people, who generally lacked much theological knowledge. What Bruno needed at that moment was to find someone to guide him, and his infallible Mother would soon send him that someone...

Converted during a reading

The person in question was a Jesuit – or rather a former Jesuit, since the Society of Jesus was closed at the time – who had a peculiar past.

Nicolas-Joseph-Albert de Diessbach was born on February 15, 1732 in Berne, Switzerland, to a noble but Calvinist family. Possessing a logical and questioning mind, he quickly took an aversion to that fallacious doctrine and declared himself an atheist.

He then decided to pursue a military career and joined the regiment commanded by his paternal uncle, soon reaching the rank of captain. His distinguished origins gave him access to the homes of the best families in the city where he was stationed, and it was during one of these visits that his conversion began.

The host, a fervent Catholic, wisely placed a good book within his guest's reach. Captain Diessbach was so attracted to reading that he could not help him-

self. From that moment on, he adhered to the true religion.

A society for doing good

But Diessbach became too serious a Catholic to be satisfied only with his own salvation. Having joined the Jesuits and begun his apostolic activity, he saw with sadness that Catholicism was being undermined in many ways, not least because of the heresies being broadcast all over the press. Something had to be done.

It was then that he had an idea: to found a society – in this case, a secret one – aimed at remedying the situation. It was 1775 when the *Amicizia Cristiana* was born. What would this institution actually do?

Good books make good "friends"

The main activity of the *Amicizia Cristiana* was closely linked to the conversion of its founder. Had his change of heart not come about as a result of good reading? Accordingly, Diessbach strove to make his society a veritable factory of good books.

Its members would scrutinize Catholic writings to check their orthodoxy and fi-

delity to the Holy See. If the books were found to be commendable, they would not only be archived in the society's library, but also circulated among the people, who were sadly lacking in true doctrine.

Only six members would make up its board of directors and they would be at the helm of a complex and structured system for collecting data, analysing doctrines, recruiting new members and disseminating approved works.

Bruno discerned the path God had mapped out for Him when he met the "Amicizia Cristiana" and its founder, Fr. Diessbach



Fr. Nicolas-Joseph-Albert de Diessbach, founder of the "Amicizia Cristiana" - St. Michael's College, Fribourg (Switzerland); inset, Fr. Bruno Lanteri's vow of adhesion to the society. On previous page, portrait of the Venerable



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Exemplary Catholics

Nevertheless, to restrict the *Amicizia's* work to this merely practical aspect would be to greatly reduce its true scope. In reality, it was not just a press society, but a *sui generis* religious congregation.

Much more than great intellectual abilities, what was required of its members was exemplary conduct. An aspirant, for example, underwent a year of continuous scrutiny in order to ascertain the real conformity of his life with Catholic principles. At the end of the assessment period, if he was found worthy, he had to take three vows: not to read any forbidden books for a year; to devote one hour a week to the careful reading of a religious formation book provided by the association; and to obey his superiors in matters related to the good order and the common activity of the *Amicizia*.²

In addition, certain rules were established for its members, such as regular reception of the Sacraments, half an hour of meditation and reading a day, and a spiritual retreat once a year. In this way, with the help of a well-structured interior life, they would be truly prepared to undertake a fruitful apostolic activity.

Lanteri and the "Amicizia Cristiana"

Needless to say, after meeting Fr. Diessbach, Bruno immediately joined his movement, because he saw in that priest the path that God had mapped out for him. The Jesuit himself realized, in turn – certainly due to a mysterious intuition – that this disciple was not just "one more". This is shown by the special attention and trust he placed in



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"The meeting of Napoleon Bonaparte and Pope Pius VII",
by Jean-Paul Laurens

*The imprisoned Pope
urgently needed
help with his plan to
defend the Church;
where could he
find it? Bruno had
a solution*

the young man, who had not yet even been ordained.

He was given to know, for example, the cipher used by the society to keep its correspondence secret, and all or most of it began to pass through his hands.

In 1783, shortly after completing his studies and receiving the priestly anointing, Lanteri became the second man of the *Amicizia* of Turin, the mother society, of great importance in relation to the others. And with Diessbach's death in 1798, he definitively took charge of the institution in that city.

Bruno also helped shape and promote the growth of other sister societies, such as the *Amiche Cristiane*, a women's organization that exercised an apostolate similar to that of its male counterpart, and the *Amicizia Sacerdotale*, which aimed to train the clergy. He was also given leadership over the *Aa*,³ which worked with seminarians.

In the direction of these associations, Lanteri sought to employ all the necessary means for the conservation of the Catholic Faith, progress in virtue and

the defence of the Holy See. On this last point, there is a very interesting fact to relate.

In defence of the Pope

Napoleon was afflicting the whole of Europe. Having made Pope Pius VII his prisoner in Savona, the emperor demanded that he recognize his right to appoint bishops. However, the Vicar of Christ knew that this was an inadmissible practice and, as a result, his position was one of intransigent refusal.

However, to be able to strike a decisive blow to the arrogance of the overbearing emperor, and thus safeguard the integrity of the flock, Pius VII needed the official decrees of the Ecumenical Council of Lyon, at which this issue had already been discussed and resolved. With them in hand, he could write a new document – based on the traditional Magisterium of the Church – that would clarify consciences once and for all. But there was an obstacle: the French government had forbidden, on pain of death or exile, the delivery of any writing to the Pope without prior analysis. So how could he have that

text brought to him? Bruno had a solution.

He, who had already been carrying out an incessant donations collection to support the august prisoner, decided to prove his fidelity and get the document to him, even if it cost him his life. To do this, he enlisted the help of a gentleman he knew, who was willing to carry the correspondence to the Supreme Pontiff.

Arriving before the Pope, the gentleman knelt to kiss his feet, and at that moment deftly concealed the decrees of the council in the hem of his cassock. Shortly afterwards, the new document of Pius VII was complete. Napoleon was beside himself with rage. "How did this happen?" everyone wondered; the French government did not know what to say...

The cunning of the children of light

Of course, Lanteri's convenient invisibility would not last forever; his reputation as an ardent Catholic was enough to make him suspect. It was not long before visitors came knocking on his door, with the intention of conducting a search and looking for evidence to incriminate him.

The host, although forced to be hospitable, watched the scene with a curious smile on his lips. In fact, Bruno's secretary had already anticipated the raid and completely cleared the area of any suspicious papers. One might even wonder if he was not aware of the forthcoming investigation...

Indeed, the *amicizie's* communication system was extremely efficient. To have an idea of how efficient, it is enough to consider that at the time of Pius VII's exile, the director-general of the imperial police in Rome, Norvins-Montbreton, noted several times



*In the Church's
defence, the Catholic
must use every
lawful means in his
reach; combining the
innocence of the dove
with the cunning
of the serpent*

that news went from Paris to Rome more quickly through the Catholic information service than through the government's special couriers!¹

It is true that many of the faithful had taken the initiative to help the Pope through secret correspondence, but Lanteri was one of those who knew particularly well how to combine the innocence of the dove with the cunning of the serpent (cf. Mt 10:16).

A lesson

Countless other facts bear witness to this different way of fighting for the Holy Church undertaken by Venerable Pio Bruno Lanteri. Suffice it to

say that he founded a religious congregation, the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, and a society similar to the *amicizie*, but which would be public: the *Catholic Amicizia*.

In short, the epic of this chosen man holds a lesson: in order to defend the rights and the honour of our Holy Mother Church, Catholics must use every lawful means at their disposal. And, let us remember, there will be no shortage of these, because creativity is not a problem for Divine Wisdom. ✠

¹ GASTALDI, Pietro. *Della vita del Servo di Dio Pio Brunone Lanteri fondatore della Congregazione degli Oblati di Maria Vergine*. Torino: Marietti, 1870, t.IV, p.21.

² Cf. PIATTI, OMV, Tommaso. *Il Servo di Dio Pio Brunone Lanteri*. 4.ed. Torino-Roma: Marietti, 1954, p.42.

³ This society was founded in Paris around 1702 and spread throughout France and surrounding regions, including the city of Turin. Its name is disputed, although it is believed that the mysterious acronym can be deciphered as *Amicizia Anonima* (cf. PIATTI, op. cit., p.61).

⁴ Cf. CRISTIANI, Léon. *Un prêtre redouté de Napoléon. P. Bruno Lanteri*. Nice: Procure des Oblats de la Vierge Marie, 1957, p.88-89.



Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish

The Maternal Hand of the Church

Holy Mother Church provides a place of reference for all faith-filled souls, where they know they will always find the Divine Word and the comfort that comes from Heaven.



✠ Sr. Juliane Campos

Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish of Structural City, located in Brazil's Federal District, has been a source of grace for its suffering people since its inception, often lifting them out of situations of great vulnerability and elevating them to the category of children of God.

To understand the depth of these words, we need to go back to the origins of this community in Brasilia.

The genesis of Structural City

Its formation was the result of the gathering of people living in extreme poverty in the mid-1960s in the area close to Brasilia's landfill, which at the time was unregulated and colloquially

known as "the dump". They went in search of means of survival and established precarious housing there.

Even without infrastructure, the cluster of shacks adjacent to the site grew and began to take on a more urbanized appearance. At the end of the 1980s, the Federal District's Complementary Sector of Industry and Supply (SCIA) was created, and in 2004 the agglomeration of hundreds of homes became its urban centre, adopting the name of the highway that cuts through the region to the south, the DF-095 or Structural Highway.

Today, the city has around 45,000 inhabitants, is largely paved and has an economic base rooted in commerce.

The former "dump" is now called a controlled landfill – the second largest in Latin America – and only receives construction waste.

Made up of mostly young inhabitants, the city has been divided into sectors, and among them is the Santa Luzia Sector, which has the most precarious infrastructure and therefore requires more attention, as Pope Leo XIV reminded us a short while ago: "the poor are at the heart of all our pastoral activity."¹

A dream come true

The Holy Church, as a loving Mother, could not remain insensitive to such a large section of the population,



João Luiz Barreto



David Ayusso

Mass at Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish and ceremony for the creation of the parish by Cardinal Paulo Cezar Costa

in need not only of material resources, but above all of spiritual support. Cherishing the dream of doing something more for the sheep of his flock, Most Rev. Sérgio da Rocha – then Metropolitan Archbishop of Brasília, now Cardinal Primate of Brazil – took the initiative to create a pastoral area under the aegis of Jesus the Good Shepherd, in the poorest part of the territory of the Parish of Our Lady of the Encounter with God, which already existed in the Structural City.

More than ten years later, on April 7, 2024, Cardinal Paulo Cezar Costa, the current Archbishop of Brasília, as a solicitous shepherd, augmented this dream: amid the alleluias of Easter, the pastoral area was transformed into the new Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish, entrusted to the care of the Clerical Society of Apostolic Life Virgo Flos Carmeli, of the Heralds of the Gospel.

On Divine Mercy Sunday, at the end of the Easter Octave, in a solemn ceremony concelebrated by Cardinal Raymundo Damasceno Assis and the Bishop of Tocantinópolis, Most Rev. Carlos Henrique Silva Oliveira, together with numerous priests, Cardinal Paulo Cezar installed the first parish priest, Fr. Lourenço Isidoro Ferronato, EP, and presented the parochial vicar, Fr. Stywart Andrey Almeida Durães, EP.

Despite not yet having a parish church or a parish house, Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish was born with bold goals and challenges: to embrace the struggles and difficulties of its flock, with courage and enthusiasm.

Intense pastoral and social action

From the outset, intense pastoral action became its daily routine. After the parish priest took over the presidency of the Santa Clara Christian Association – a Catholic organization founded in the early days of the pastoral area with the aim of providing

The Church could not be indifferent towards a people in need, not only of material resources, but above all of spiritual support

social outreach, and which operates on the premises of the Santa Luzia Chapel – he began to give special spiritual assistance to the nursery linked to it, which provides day care for around one hundred children, and faces the material challenge of covering the costs of its maintenance and activities every month.

This association, in partnership with the parish, also assists around four hundred and twenty families with donations of clothes, medication and food, and offers medical, dental, psychological, nutritional and legal care to the local community, as well as cultural and sports activities, with the support of volunteers. Skills-training courses for young people and adults are also provided.

In addition, every month the parish distributes a hundred basic food baskets – sometimes more, when a special donation is received, as in the case of the Save Me Queen of Fatima Campaign, which offered one hundred and fifty baskets – to families in impoverished situations, and the parish health outreach organizes a community breakfast on the third Sunday of every month, served after the eight o'clock Mass and dedicated to the sick.

One sociocultural initiative that has had a particularly positive impact on the community was the Music Project



From top to bottom: Christmas celebration with distribution of gifts, meal and Mass with the children at the Santa Clara Christian Association nursery; performance by the participants of the Music Project at Jesus the Good Shepherd; an Artisanal Bakery Project class.



From left to right: dental care at the Santa Clara Christian Association; community breakfast after the Mass for the sick; Mass in one of the shops in Automobile City; procession through the streets of Structural City

Photos: Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish

at Jesus the Good Shepherd, run by the female branch of the Heralds of the Gospel, with the aim of awakening a taste for music and culture in children and teenagers. Its first performance was at the well-attended Christmas cantata held on *Gaudete* Sunday, conducted by Fr. Anderson Fernandes, EP.

Another venture being set up in the parish is the Artisanal Bakery Project, an initiative of the Brazilian vice president's wife, Maria Lúcia Alckmin. A first group took part in the bread-making course on the premises of the Church of Our Lady of Mercy and new groups were subsequently formed in the Jesus the Good Shepherd community. The course has already been administered twice in the parish, and the participants have been given the opportunity to enter the labour market, either in bakeries or confectioneries, or by setting up their own small businesses or even making their own bread at home.

Fruits marked by the supernatural

Notwithstanding all this social work, the parish priest and his collaborators are well aware that "the gravest form of poverty is not to know God,"² as the Pontiff also reminds us. And they see with joy that the fruits of their dedicated work are marked by super-

*These simple souls,
hungry for God and
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by grace, draw closer
to the Church*

natural effects: these simple souls, hungry for God, full of gratitude for the benefits received and moved by grace, draw closer to the Church and begin to participate enthusiastically in ecclesial life.

Trusting in God's help to build its parish church, which continues to function somewhat precariously in a tent, the parish has provided countless opportunities for the faithful to participate in the Sacraments and the Sacred Liturgy. It has already been possible to celebrate the feast of the parish Patron, the Good Shepherd; to carry out more than a hundred Baptisms, countless First Communions and two Confirmation ceremonies, with a third planned for the end of this

year; to administer the Anointing of the Sick to those needing it and to celebrate many funerals.

More than a dozen Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist received their investiture in a ceremony celebrated by Cardinal Paulo Cezar in November, and in December, as a gift to the Immaculate Conception of Mary, twenty-seven altar servers and four acolytes were instituted to serve at the altar. Processions were also held in honour of the Immaculate Conception on December 8 and Our Lady of Fatima on May 13.

In October 2024 and in March of this year, hundreds of devotees consecrated themselves to Our Lady, according to the method of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, in Eucharistic celebrations attended by countless faithful from all over the Federal District and neighbouring states. The proper preparation was done through the online course given by Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP, on the Reconquista Catholic Formation Platform of the Heralds of the Gospel, or in person in the community itself.

Born in the Easter Season, the parish was able to celebrate its first Lent and Holy Week this year. The voice of the Divine Redeemer seemed to



From left to right: Mass in one of the parish's communities; administration of the Anointing of the Sick during a visit to parishioners' homes; Baptism in the parish's provisional headquarters

echo: "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you" (Lk 22:15)! There was a recitation of the Way of the Cross through the streets, a Palm Sunday procession and a Passion Concert performed by the Heralds of the Gospel, as well as all the ceremonies proper to the Easter Triduum: Mass of the Lord's Supper and washing of the feet, the Passion Celebration on Good Friday and the Easter Vigil, culminating in the jubilation of the Resurrection and joyful Easter celebrations with the children.

Goals proposed and achieved

In the short time it has been in existence, the parish has been able to achieve so many goals that the brief lines of an article are not enough to recount everything, let alone all the details that reveal the gentle hand of Our Lady guiding each of its steps.

In addition to what has been reported, we can add the visits made to the homes of parishioners, with the enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, blessing and consecration of the family, as well as the monthly Holy Mass celebrated in shops of "Automobile City" – an area of the Commerce and Services Sector of the Federal District within parish bounds – in

*Providence
has blessed their
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becoming a
reference point for
Structural City*

the presence of the owner, employees and neighbours.

And just to mention a few of the other milestones achieved, in September was initiated the Rosary for Mothers, who pray for their children, and last January the Men's Rosary, on Fridays. Also at the beginning of this year, the 8th Agape Encounter for Couples was held in the Santa Luzia Chapel, with the participation of twenty-five couples; in April, with the help of the shared coordinator of the Vicariate Centre, the Apostleship of Prayer was founded; and in May there was a pilgrimage to the basilicas and houses of the Heralds of the Gospel in the state of São Paulo, with the participation of sixty pilgrims.

The parish priest and vicar know no rest, truly working in the apostolic style, for at times they have no "leisure even to eat" (Mk 6:31)! Such activity would be impossible without the support of several Heralds of the Gospel who constantly help them by giving catechesis and training courses, welcoming the faithful, enriching liturgical singing, accompanying home visits and assisting them in everything they need.

Providence has indeed blessed their efforts, and the new parish is every day becoming a reference point for Structural City, where its humble but faith-filled people know that they will always be favoured with the Divine Word and a breath of encouragement from Heaven that gives meaning to their daily battles and sufferings. There, the Holy Church allows them to participate in the honour of belonging to the divine family, of being called to the banquet of the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. ✠

¹ LEO XIV. *Message for the 9th World Day of the Poor*, n.5.

² Idem, n.3.



Slaves of Jesus, Through Mary

Throughout the months of May and June, thousands of people made their consecration to the Blessed Virgin according to the method of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. The photos below show views of the ceremonies held at Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Madrid, Spain; Our Lady of Fatima Church in Tocancipá, Colombia; Our Lady of Guadalupe (or Buen Tono) Church in Mexico City; Santa

Sofia Church in Santiago, Chile; Santa Helena Parish in Antiguo Cuscatlán, El Salvador; the University Parish of Saint Mary of the Annunciation in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; and the house of the Heralds in Maputo, Mozambique. A Mass was also celebrated for those who had previously made their consecration with Fr. Manuel Rodríguez, EP, at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Mexico City.



Mexico

Ronny Fisher



Colombia

Jesse Arce



Chile

Ricardo José Cull



Mexico

Ronny Fisher



Spain

Mateo Peláez



Dominican Republic

Mariana Feliz



Mozambique

Mauro Machiana



El Salvador

Sebastián Cadavid



Solemnity of Corpus Christi

On the occasion of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the Heralds of the Gospel participated in various celebrations and processions in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. Highlights include the ceremonies held in Rome by Pope Leo XIV, who presided over Holy Mass in the Basilica of St. John Lateran and bore the monstrance with the Holy Eucharist to St. Mary Major Basilica; at the Basilica of San Marco in Venice; the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary

in Caieiras, State of São Paulo; the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Cotia (SP); the Metropolitan Cathedral of Asunción, Paraguay; the Metropolitan Cathedral of Maputo, Mozambique; in other Brazilian States: at the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Piraquara, (PR); the Church of Our Lady of Claríssimos Montes, (MG); in the Church of San Salvador in Lauro de Freitas (BA); and the Heralds' house in Maringá (PR).



Venice

Sammy Blondo



Rome



Rome

Nuno Moura



Caieiras (SP)

Stephen Nami



Cotia (SP)

Emerson Júnior



Cotia (SP)

Emerson Júnior



Piraquara (PR)

Alexandro Silva



Mozambique

Mauro Machiana



Paraguay

Xavier Jacob



Maringá (PR)

Maria Fernanda Aguiar



Montes Claros (MG)

Tatiane de Oliveira



Lauro de Freitas (BA)

Eduardo de Barros



Photos: João Lucas Guimarães



Reginaldo Pomim

Brazil – Choirs of the Heralds of the Gospel sang at the Eucharistic Celebration for the blessing of the altar of St. Anthony Parish in Mogi das Cruzes (SP), presided over by Diocesan Bishop Pedro Luiz Stringhini, on May 27 (photo 1), as well as the Mass for the blessing of the bells of the Cathedral of the Divine Holy Spirit, on June 7 (photo 3), and the feast of the Patron Saint of the Shrine of St. Anthony, on June 13 (photo 2), the latter two in Caraguatatuba (SP) and presided over by the Diocesan Bishop José Carlos Chacowski, CM.

Photos: Chris Coutinho



India – In the city of Bangalore, the month of May which is dedicated in a special way to the Blessed Virgin came to a close with the crowning of the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and a beautiful procession in the vicinity of St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral, organized by members of the Heralds of the Gospel in India.

Photos: Gustavo Kralj



Canada – Members of the “Mary, Queen of All Hearts” Shrine Apostolate met at the house of the Heralds near Toronto for a May gathering, during which a processional Rosary was held on the grounds of the residence as well as the celebration of Holy Mass.



Photos: Ronny Fisher

Mexico – Twelve thousand faithful from across the country participated in the annual pilgrimage of the Heralds of the Gospel to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City, on June 7. The programme began with the recitation of the Rosary on the esplanade of the basilica, followed by the celebration of a thanksgiving Mass, presided over by Fr. Manuel Rodríguez, EP with the institution's choir providing the music.



Photos: Armandito García

United States – The 37th gathering of the Hispanic Ministry of the Diocese of Palm Beach was held on May 25 with the presence of Diocesan Bishop, Most Rev. Gerald Michael Barbarito. Fr. Joaquim Fernandes, EP, gave one of the talks, organized the Eucharistic procession and delivered the homily of the Holy Mass.



Photos: Roberto Salas

Guatemala – Another benefit dinner was held at the Westin Camino Real Hotel in Guatemala City to support the construction of the church of the Heralds of the Gospel. The Apostolic Nuncio to the country, Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, attended the event.



Even on the Other Side of the World...

Not content with only helping those who invoke her from her own country and her devotees spread throughout her continent, Dona Lucilia sets out in search of needy souls even in the faraway lands of the East...



✠ Elizabete Fátima Astorino

Dona Lucilia's intercession transcends barriers. Since her death in 1968, we have witnessed the discreet but ever-growing blossoming of a devotion that opens up new paths. The number of people who have been helped by her in the most diverse parts of the world is a pledge of hope for all those who turn to her because, for this very good mother, distances no longer exist.

On that note, today we invite our readers to travel the more than thirteen thousand kilometres that separate us from India, so that we can learn about an incident which occurred in that South Asian country: another episode in the magnificent picture painted by God through Dona Lucilia.

In the city of St. Francis Xavier

The family of Mr. James Kurian and his wife Nadisha Coelho live in the state of Goa, a land blessed by the evangelization of the great St. Francis Xavier. A coastal state, it has the peculiarity of being one of the smallest in India and is divided into two districts: North Goa and South Goa. One of its main cities is Old Goa, in the northern district, as

it is home to the Basilica of Bom Jesus, a point of reference for Catholics in the region and for any travelers visiting the region, for it houses the holy missionary's incorrupt body.

In March of this year, James had to replace a co-worker at a big event, as she was on leave. On the evening of March 5, he contacted her to iron out some practical details about the activity. After the call, the lady, in conversation with her husband, went on to comment a little on him and his work in the company.

The following day, March 6, while passing near Old Goa on his way to work, James noticed two missed calls from this lady on his mobile phone and immediately called her back to find out what she needed. She explained that she was on her way to the hospital with her mother and requested prayers for her, as she was very ill. However, as his colleague spoke, James had an inexplicable inner certainty: "This illness will not lead to death, but is for the glory of God."

He promised to include the whole family in his prayers and recommended that they not lose hope.

In the hospital, death and resurrection...

But God's ways are often inexplicable to our earthly way of seeing things... And this is what became apparent when they arrived at the hospital. Despite medical care, the elderly woman had a cardiac arrest under which she succumbed, and the cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) process, during which she was defibrillated three times, was unsuccessful.

As a result, the doctor declared the patient dead, as there was every indication of her clinical death.

Half an hour later, when the family had already been informed of the lady's death, the doctor decided, quite unexpectedly, to intervene once again by performing one last defibrillation. This time, against all odds, the elderly woman revived. She had been without vital signs for more than thirty minutes!

At the same moment, her daughter sent a message to James, informing him that her mother had revived, but that her heart rate was very low, and for this reason she was asking him to continue praying.

That afternoon, James went to the hospital to pay a quick visit to his co-worker's mother. As he approached her bedside, he noticed that she was very restless and, bothered by the pulmonary ventilator, was trying to remove her mask. He placed a rosary in her hands and prayed for her, and was pleasantly surprised to see her open her eyes for the first time after the onset of the emergency.

However, the situation was still a precarious one. The medical team feared that the poor lady would be left with irreversible brain damage, as she had been without oxygen for half an hour. After two days, however, she overcame the crisis, started breathing on her own again and her vital functions stabilized. The tests showed no sequelae, and the doctors gave assurance of her complete recovery!

On March 15 she returned home. Today she can walk and her memory is in perfect order.

Having reached this point in the story, the reader will surely be wondering how this event – in which the power of prayer is evident, it is true, but whose happy outcome could well be attributed to natural and ordinary factors – has anything to do with Dona Lucilia's intercession, since her name was not even mentioned... Let us continue with the story.

An inexplicable encounter

On March 17, James' colleague returned to work and came to thank him for his support and prayers. She also wanted to tell him about an unusual episode for which she could find no explanation.

On the day her mother had suffered the heart attack, she and her husband were on their way to the hospital and, just before Old Goa, in a place where nobody usually stands even to wait for a bus, they both saw an elderly woman asking for a lift. She was well dressed and very respectable and distinguished.

They decided to stop the vehicle and offer her a ride. She accepted and, when she got in, declared that she wanted to go to Panjim, the administrative centre of the North Goa District. Shortly into



Dona Lucilia in the mid-1930s, walking on the streets of São Paulo; on previous page, the Taj Mahal, Agra (India)

On the streets of India, the couple saw a distinguished elderly lady, dressed as in former times, and asking for a lift. Who was she?

the journey, she asked the couple: "Is something bad happening?" James' colleague explained what had happened to her mother and why they were going to the hospital. In response, the stranger recommended: "Just do one thing: call that gentleman you were talking about last night, and everything will be fine." Having said that, she asked to get off right there, the car having already left the territory of Old Goa, and without further explanation she left.

How was it possible that she knew who James was, and that the couple had had a conversation about him the night before? Without understanding, but following her advice, she actually did call her colleague to ask for prayers, as we have seen.

Searching for an answer

At first, James thought it was an apparition of a soul from Purgatory, but when he told his wife, Nadisha, what had happened, she immediately thought that the case was more akin to Dona Lucilia's way of acting, as she knew of reports of similar manifestations by her in the past.¹

Curious to see if it had been Dona Lucilia, after the conversation with his wife James called his colleague and asked her for more details about the lady she and her husband had met. She replied that she was an elderly woman with short grey hair and white skin. She then commented that she was wearing a dress from former times, blue in colour with embroidered sleeves, and repeated that she was a distinguished lady, adding that she spoke English very well.

James told his mother-in-law, Anna Coelho, everything that had happened and she sent him two photographs of Dona Lucilia to show to his co-worker.

"Who is she?"

While in his office on March 20, at the end of another day's work, James remembered Dona Lucilia's photographs and went to show them to his

colleague, asking if the lady who had got into her car looked like the person pictured there. When she saw them, she was deeply shocked, sat down and asked: “Sir, who is she?”

Realizing what an effect the photograph had had on his colleague, James was at a loss to say who Dona Lucilia was... After all, how could he explain the appearance of this lady who had been dead for decades, in a city on the other side of the world? In a few words, he explained his connection with her: “My wife’s siblings belong to a religious community, and this is the mother of their founder. She is from Brazil,” was his initial attempt.

Still not fully understanding, his colleague asked in bewilderment: “So was she born here, or something?” James had to explain again that she had been born and lived in Brazil, and this time he added that she had died many years ago... Hearing this, the lady was even more astonished.

After perceiving the supernatural nature of what had happened, she understood the message from God

that it contained and told her story to James.

Her grandfather had died of a snake-bite a few months after her father’s birth, leaving her grandmother in a very difficult financial situation. She was advised to sell food at the market during the St. Francis Xavier novenas, and this is how she managed to raise her children. As a result, her father always retained a great devotion to the missionary Saint and later passed this on to his whole family, so that they never did

anything important without first visiting the basilica in Old Goa.

In this she recognized the message of the episode that took place on the way to the hospital, because Dona Lucilia got into her vehicle before Old Goa and left after they were out of Old Goa, in other words, she was with her all the way through the symbolic place where her family had always gone in order to ask for divine protection, meaning that they would not lack it during the hard phase they were entering. Filled with gratitude, she exclaimed: “Only God can do something like this!”

Without a doubt, Dona Lucilia was at this family’s side, helping them to get through their difficulties, and she will also be by the side of each one of us, wherever we find ourselves, even in faraway India! ❖

*The confirmation
of Dona Lucilia’s
intervention was in
the basilica of Old
Goa, so symbolic
for that family:
“Only God can do
something like this!”*

¹ In this regard, see the article: Immense Goodness and Compassion. In: *Heralds of the Gospel*. Nobleton. Vol. 16, No.181 (Nov., 2022), p.38-41.



Basilica of Bom Jesus, Old Goa (India)

...why Our Lady is invoked as the “Tower of David”?



Sailko (CC by 3.0)

Symbols of some of the Marian titles - Art Museum of Palazzo Gavotti, Savona (Italy)

The Litany of Loreto compiles some of the countless titles of the Blessed Virgin that have biblical origins or special theological significance.

The invocation *Tower of David*, for example, goes back to a passage of Scripture concerning the fortifications with which the prophet-king protected Jerusalem: “like the tower of David, built for an arsenal, whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors” (Sg 4:4).

Mary is compared to a tower for various reasons. First of all, in order for such a building to be impregnable, it must have solid foundations. Now, God wanted to establish the incomparable spiritual edifice of the Blessed Virgin’s virtues upon indestructible foundations, namely, her faith and humility.

Furthermore, a tower attracts attention because it surpasses other buildings in height and dominates the surrounding area. Our Lady rose above

creatures through the contemplation and knowledge of divine perfections, her sublimity surpassing the Seraphim themselves.

Thirdly, the Most Pure Virgin resembles a tower because of her insurmountable strength. She is the Mother of Sorrows who valiantly endured the sufferings of the Passion, the strong Woman who sustains the Church Militant, helping her children who invoke her with confidence and giving them fortitude and courage in all tribulations.

Finally, in Mary we find a safe defence against the onslaughts of evil, since She possesses the shields of warriors: the faith of the prophets and Apostles, the constancy of the martyrs, the candour of the virgins, the astuteness of the Doctors and the virtue of the confessors. She is the fortress in which faithful souls can take refuge without fear! ✦

...the origin of the statue of Christ the Redeemer?

The thirty-metre-high statue built on the peak of Corcovado – one of the most enchanting spots in Rio de Janeiro – soon became the main symbol of the Brazilian nation and earned a place among the seven wonders of the modern world. More beautiful than the sculpture itself and the panorama in which it stands, however, is the origin of this Christian monument.

In 1888, a few months after Princess Isabel granted freedom to the slaves, the abolitionists decided to honour her. They asked Her Royal Highness to authorize them to build a statue on Corcovado in honour of “Isabel, redeemer of the slaves.”

The response could not have been more pious: refusing the homage offered her, the princess turned the idea into an imperial order, commanding an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the true Redeemer of mankind, to be erected there.

However, many battles ensued before this noble wish was realized because, with the fall of the monarchy the following year, the project was cancelled... and an opportunity to take it up again only came about in 1921.

The inauguration finally took place on October 12, 1931, the feast of the Patroness of Brazil. On that day Corcovado became, in the words of Pope

Pius XI (cf. Letter, 14/9/1931), a true throne of Jesus Christ, who with open arms seems to invite all His children to a tender embrace! ✦

Christ the Redeemer -
Rio de Janeiro



Donatas Dabravolskis

Extravagance or Boldness

The Holy Spirit always inspires new charisms in the Holy Church, capable of moving souls towards the one and only good. The spirit of the world, however, often has to resort to extravagance in its craving for novelty.

✠ Raphaël Six



Photos: Reproduction

The *Ancien Régime* – as the political and social system in France during the period immediately preceding the Revolution of 1789 came to be known – was a complex era. In it, all the tradition forged over the centuries by Christian Civilization often coexisted with the worst foolishness stemming from the already explosive outburst of passions, born of the weakening of faith and the corruption of customs.

This conflict, manifest in social customs, was a reflection of the conflicts – no less violent and much more profound – that agitated souls at the time, and whose outcome, a few years later, would be the bloody convulsions of the Revolution. This is the only way to understand why, along with an unprecedented refinement in social dealings, we can find examples of extravagance in this historical era that not even the eccentricities of our days, in all their multiplicity of expressions, can surpass.

To mention just one, let us consider the role of Rose Bertin, a lady of modest means who, around 1774, became the official court hatmaker and climbed the social ladder due to her remarkable artistic abilities. It was this revolutionary fashion designer who was responsible for making the head-dress that the reader sees in the first illustration of this article.

The extravagance is evident, even for the increasingly carnivalesque customs that have invaded today's social life. The composition represents an enormous, swaying ship incredibly balanced on the head of the poor sovereign wearing it.

Not only the dimensions, but the very theme chosen – a French victory over the British Navy – is bound to shock, especially in the social trappings of a person of such noble status. Such a representation would be excessive even perched atop a wedding cake...

In the second illustration, the reader contemplates St. Catherine Labouré

"Pouf à la Belle Poule", fashion created by Rose Bertin; below, "Promenade in the Garden of the Palais Royal", by Louis Le Cœur - National Gallery of Art, Washington DC



dressed in the religious habit of the Daughters of Charity, an institute founded by St. Vincent de Paul. Nowadays, the *cornette* – the large head-dress worn by these religious women – may seem unusual, but it immediately inspires affinity. In its whiteness, it seems to open up like the wings of a symbolic dove, or like a luminous halo of virginity concealing the seer of the apparitions of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. It is no wonder, then, that it is piously believed to this day that the holy founder intended to represent the wings of the Angels with the *cornette*...

This is truly a magnificent example of how the Church desires the grandeur of the religious vocation to shine, protecting her daughters while showing them as models of virtue: since their foundation in 1633, the Daughters of Charity adopted the beautiful *cornette* precisely as a mark of humility. In fact, St. Vincent de Paul wanted his spiritual daughters to dress like the middle and working class of the time,

and the *cornette* was characteristic of the peasant women of that region, Île-de-France. Inspired by the wisdom of the Church, it was stylized by the nuns and, when it fell into disuse among the people, it became a distinctive sign of the Order.

Every feminine adornment is designed to emphasize the beauty of the wearer. Rose Bertin's naval head-dress, however, seems to be aimed simply at attracting attention. The more it shows itself, the more the extravagance eclipses the feminine dignity and personality of the wearer. On the contrary, in its radiant simplicity, the *cornette* of the Daughters of Charity represents true boldness made of humility, without baseness and enlivened by the exalted concept of faith of those who veil their natural charm under the holocaust of religious life. The more they hide themselves, the more the light of Christ radiates from their countenances, accentuating their true feminine dignity. ✚



Reproduction

St. Catherine Labouré; below, Daughters of Charity in diverse activities



Photos: filles-de-la-charite.org





Epitome of Humility and Glory

Who could be humbler than She who considered herself unworthy to be the slave of the Saviour's Mother?

Did not this attitude represent the highest and purest expression of poverty of spirit? Just as her unpretentiousness reached the

highest possible degree, so did her elevation and glory, in the same measure. This is why the Church praises her as Queen of Heaven! No one has ever deserved a greater reward.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP