



HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

№ 217 - November 2025

A portrait of an elderly man with glasses, smiling. He is wearing a white clerical shirt with a red collar and red buttons. The background is a soft-focus image of a church interior with columns.

*“The memory of the
righteous is a blessing”*

Unifying Link with Jesus and Mary

It is a very troublesome thought that so many persons have lofty and sincere aspirations after high things, and so few reach them; that, as Godeinez says, so many are called to perfection, and so few answer to the call; that so many begin ardently and prudently, and yet die leaving their tower unbuilt. [...] A persuasion, which I venture to record, [is] that the common cause of all failures in perfection is the want of abiding sorrow for sin. [...] Just as all good works crumble away which do not rest upon our Saviour, so in like manner all holiness has lost its principle of growth if it is separated from abiding sorrow for sin. For the principle of growth is not love only, but forgiven love. [...]

[This sorrow] is quiet. Indeed, it rather tranquillizes a troubled soul than perturbs a contented one. It hushes the noises of the world, and rebukes the loquacity of the human spirit. It softens asperities, subdues exaggerations, and constrains everything with a sweet and gracious spell which nothing else can equal. It is supernatural. For it has a

natural motive to feed upon. It is all from God, and all for God. It is forgiven sin for which we mourn, and not sin which perils self. And this very fact makes it also a fountain of love.

We love because much has been forgiven,

and we always remember how much it was. We love because the forgiveness has abated fear. We love because we wonder at the compassion that could so visit such unworthiness. We love because the softness of sorrow is akin to the filial confidence of love.

Thus, abiding sorrow for sin is the only possible parallel in our souls to the mysterious life-long sorrow of Jesus and Mary; and the fact that sorrow clung to them characteristically in spite of their sinlessness seems to show how

much of the secret life of Christian holiness is hidden in its gentle supernatural melancholy.

FABER, CO, Frederick William.

“Growth in Holiness.” Baltimore:

John Murphy and Co., 1856, p.336-358



“The Universal Judgement”, by Niccolò di Tommaso -
Galleria Matteo Salamon, Milan (Italy)

Saiko (CC BY-SA 3.0)

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in a single battle



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is no longer enough...



Deensel (CC by 2.0)

50 From a Roman patrician
to the 21st century

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



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

Can I pray while driving? Can I, for example, access the Heralds' channel and pray the Rosary when I am behind the wheel?

João Carlos Alvim – São Paulo

To adequately answer this question, we need to remember what prayer is. The Catechism of the Catholic Church adopts the classic definition: "Lifting up the mind toward God" (CCC 2098).

But when is it that we raise our minds to God?

Jesus tells us in the Gospel that we "ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18:1). Therefore, one can never pray too much, as long as the duties of one's state in life are not thereby neglected.

Pope Benedict XVI stated in an audience on May 11, 2011: "And man knows, in a certain way, that he can turn to God; he knows he can pray to Him.

St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest theologians of history, defines prayer as 'an expression of man's desire for God.'"

So, concretely, can we pray while driving?

Yes, without any doubt whatsoever. Can we pray a Rosary while traveling, following, for example, the Heralds' channel? Of course we can!

But be careful! Prayer is a very important act. Praying while commuting does not exempt one from the duty of setting aside time specifically for God.

Prayer that is said while engaged in some activity should be the expression of a heart that is eager to sanctify every moment of the day. It can also arise from the contingency of someone being overly busy with work, but who does not want to neglect praying the Rosary. That is wonderful!

But prayer said in a church will normally have much greater value. This is what St. John Chrysostom says, and his words can also be applied to prayers recited outside the home, for example, in the car:

"Although you can indeed pray in your home, you will not know how to pray there as you do in church [...]. When you invoke the Lord in private, you are not as well heard as when you do so in the company of your brothers. There is something more in church: the union of spirits and voices, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests" (*Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu*. Homélie 3: SC 28bis, 219).

When we sin, specifically through carnality, does an evil angel enter into the temptation, inciting us to think about it?

Héctor Caro Nieto – Via e-mail

This question was once posed, almost in the same words, to Msgr. João during one of his catechism classes. And our founder responded as follows:

In principle, a temptation can come exclusively from the lust of the flesh, that is, from fallen human nature due to sin. But he added, while expressing agreement with this theory, that many teachers of the spiritual life affirm that the devil's action enters into *all* temptations.

Now, this position is perfectly supported by Catholic doctrine, as we can see in the *Catechism*: "By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free.

Original sin entails 'captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil'" (CCC 407).

The fight against temptation will, therefore, always be a clash with the devil: "For a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man. [...] Caught in this conflict, man is obliged to wrestle constantly if he is to cling to what is good" (SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 37).

But we cannot forget that, without the help of God's grace, the practice chastity is impossible. To achieve this, it is necessary to pray and frequent the Sacraments.

St. Augustine expressed it in incomparable words:

"As regards continency, I imagined it to be under the control of our own strength (though in myself I found it not) [...]. You would give it, if with heartfelt groaning I should knock at Your ears, and should with firm faith cast my care upon You" (*Confessions*, L.VI, c.11, no. 20).

YESTERDAY, A YEAR AGO...

As this month marks one year since the departure into eternity of the founder of the Heralds of the Gospel, Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, we turn our gaze to that dawn of November 1st, experiencing two seemingly contradictory impressions.

On one hand, it seems like yesterday that we received the news that the fourteen years of the arduous calvary that began in 2010 with the cerebrovascular accident he suffered, and accepted with exemplary abandonment to the mysterious ways of Providence, were at an end. Providence, at last, was calling him to Himself.

Three days of blessed funerals rites followed, marked by the liturgical splendour proper to the ceremonies of the Holy Church for the occasion, by the serene nostalgia of a multitude of Heralds and associates who came from around the world for the final farewell, and by an unparalleled fraternal affection. It was the same affection that Msgr. João had always poured out upon his children, and this was now manifesting itself in a different way; purer, more intense, and entirely supernatural. In this new phase, a new relationship was inaugurated, both between master and disciples, as well as among brethren in the vocation.

On the other hand, a year has passed, but it seems as though decades have passed, both due to the cascade of events that marked these twelve months and the immense progress of a work that, amid countless struggles, continues to grow throughout the world, making fidelity to the spirit of its founder its precept.

Both perspectives, however, harmonize under the gaze of faith. The physical absence of our beloved father ultimately highlighted the permanence of that same spirit which, embodied in realities as diverse as ways of being, forms of apostolate, buildings, and, above all, people, continued to animate the institution he created. What a contrast! While, through the vicissitudes of his final years, the visible presence of the founder was gradually withdrawn from his children, after his entry into eternity, Msgr. João resumed activity – and with superabundance and effectiveness – with his disciples, through the Communion of Saints.

It is no coincidence that the Book of Proverbs proclaims: “The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot” (Prv 10:7). Indeed, those who were unfaithful to God depart, as happened to King Jehoram, “with no one’s regret” (2 Chr 21:20), no matter how much the pomp of the world tries to artificially prolong their memory.

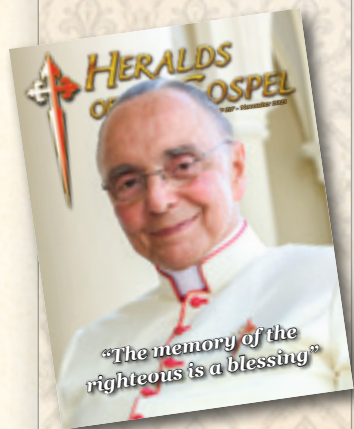
But men of faith are communicative even after leaving this earthly life, as Scripture affirms of Abel, who, even after death, still speaks (cf. Heb 11:4).

Thus, a year after that apparent separation, Msgr. João is more alive than ever, because he truly continues to speak to us. He communicates with us through his example, through his works, through his intercession – why not say so, respecting the infallible judgement of the Church? – and through his surprises...

Yes, our founder was always the “João of good surprises,” as Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira affectionately called him, and these twelve months have only served to prove to us that, since his presence has become more spiritual, this characteristic has been enhanced.

What other unexpected gifts does Msgr. João still have in store for his children and for the world? We do not know.

We only believe there will be many, for if he so ardently sought the glory of God and the good of his neighbour during his earthly life, he will seek them even more in eternity, where there are no barriers to his actions that will allow him, even more, to be a blessed instrument for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in hearts and in the world. ✠



*Msgr. João
Scognamiglio
Clá Dias, EP, on
25/1/2022*

Photo: Teresita Morazzani



Lift Up Your Hearts!

Christianity is the reality of the union of earth with Heaven,
for it invites us to elevate our thoughts from the changing
conditions of earthly life to the heights of eternal life.

A FAVOURABLE OCCASION TO RAISE OUR GAZE

The Solemnity of All Saints is a favourable occasion to raise our gaze from earthly realities, marked by time, to God's dimension, the dimension of eternity and holiness. [...] all members of the People of God are called to become holy, according to the Apostle Paul's affirmation:

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thes 4:3). We are therefore invited to see the Church not only in her temporal and human aspect, marked by fragility, but as Christ wanted her to be, that is, in "the communion of saints".

BENEDICT XVI.
Angelus, 1/11/2011

EARTH AND HEAVEN: JUST ONE REALITY

This feast day helps us to reflect on the double horizon of humanity, which we symbolically express with the words "earth" and "Heaven": the earth represents the journey of history, Heaven eternity, the fullness of life in God. And so this feast day helps us to think about the Church in its dual dimension: the Church journeying in time and the Church that celebrates the never-ending feast, the heavenly Jerusalem. These two dimensions are united by the reality of the "Communion of Saints": a reality that begins here on earth and that reaches its fulfilment in Heaven.

BENEDICT XVI.
Angelus, 1/11/2012

"WE HAVE NOT HERE A LASTING CITY"

All Christians, rich or poor, must keep their eye fixed on Heaven, remembering that "we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." (Heb 13:14). [...]

With eyes lifted on high, our Faith sees the new heavens and the new earth described by Our first Predecessor, St. Peter (2 Pt 3:13). While the promises of the false prophets of this earth melt away in blood and tears, the great apocalyptic prophecy of the Redeemer shines forth in heavenly splendour: "Behold, I make all things new." (Rv 21:5).

PIUS XI.
Divini Redemptoris, 19/3/1937

WE ARE PIGRIMS SEEKING THE LORD

We are all pilgrims and we are always pilgrims, walking as we seek to follow the Lord, and as we seek the path that is truly ours in life.

That is certainly not easy, but with the help of the Lord, the intercession of the saints, and by encouraging one another, you can be certain that, as long as you remain faithful, trusting always in God's mercy, the experience of this pilgrimage will continue to bear fruit throughout your lives.

LEO XIV.
Speech, 5/7/2025

BEING CHRISTIAN SIGNIFIES OPENNESS TO COMMUNION WITH HEAVEN

On earth, the Church is the beginning of this mystery of communion that unites humanity, a mystery totally centred on Jesus Christ: it is he who introduced this new dynamic to mankind, a movement that leads towards God and at the same time towards unity, towards peace in its deepest sense. [...] Being a Christian, being part of the Church means being open to this communion, like a seed that dies in the ground, germinates and sprouts upwards, toward Heaven. [...]

In fact, being united to Christ, in the Church, does not negate one's personality, but opens it, transforms it with the power of love, and confers on it, already here on earth, an eternal dimension. In essence, it means being conformed to the image of the Son of God (cf. Rom 8:29), fulfilling the plan of God who created man in His own image and likeness.

BENEDICT XVI.
Angelus, 1/11/2012

THE CHURCH MAKES THIS UNION A REALITY

Christianity is the meeting-point of earth and Heaven. It lays claim to the whole man, body and soul, intellect and will, inducing him to raise his mind above the changing conditions of this earthly existence and reach upwards for the eternal life of

Heaven, where one day he will find his unfailing happiness and peace.

ST. JOHN XXIII.
Mater et Magistra, 15/5/1961

ETERNITY BECOMES PRESENT IN TIME

Thus, eternity can already be present at the heart of earthly and temporal life when the soul is united through grace with God, its ultimate foundation. Everything passes, God alone never changes. [...] All Christians, called to holiness, are men and women who live firmly anchored to this “Rock”, their feet on the ground but their hearts already in Heaven, the final dwelling-place of friends of God.

BENEDICT XVI.
Angelus, 1/11/2006

HOLINESS IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Holiness usually seems like an extreme and superlative term, a manifestation of moral and religious perfection, exceptional and inaccessible to most people, not a normal state offered to all and required of all. For we usually reserve this qualification of holiness for human figures who have fully and sublimely realized the ideal of the follower of Christ – the hero, the martyr, the ascetic, the extraordinary man – who stands out from the crowd and presents a superior and singular structure of human personality, who became a giant not only through effort, the result of which was positive in imitation of the Divine Master, but also due to a preferential abundance of charismatic gifts and a mystical communion with the very life of Christ [...].

Holiness is a gift; holiness is common and accessible to all Christians;



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**The attraction for Heaven impels us to quicken
the steps of our earthly pilgrimage, so as to unite
ourselves forever to the family of Saints**

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

holiness is, we might say, the normal state of human life, elevated to a supernatural, mysterious, and magnificent dignity; it is the newness offered by Christ to humanity, redeemed by Him in faith and grace.

ST. PAUL VI.
General Audience, 14/7/1971

THE FACE OF GOD FOR MEN

Who are the saints? The saints are those who have clothed themselves with the white garment of the “new man” (Col 3:10), bringing baptismal grace to its full development. They are the participants and witnesses of the holy God, the “hidden” God (Is 45:15). Thanks to them, He reveals Himself, makes Himself visible, and becomes present among us. [...]

The Saints are the people of God redeemed by the Blood of the Lord: an immense multitude, coming from the tribes of Israel and from all peoples. Together they constitute the true Israel, the community of the saved, the Church of God, the descendants of Abraham, in whom the peoples are blessed.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Angelus, 1/11/1983

ONLY SAINTS CAN TRANSFORM THE WORLD

The Church and the world today desperately need these men and women, from all walks of life: priests, religious, and laypeople, because only people of such stature and holiness will be able to transform our tormented world and restore, along with peace, that spiritual and truly Christian orientation to which all people intimately aspire, even if sometimes unconsciously, and for which we all so desperately need.

ST. PAUL VI.
Homily, 25/10/1970

LET US JOIN THE FAMILY OF SAINTS!

On this day we feel revive within us our attraction to Heaven, which impels us to quicken the steps of our earthly pilgrimage. We feel enkindled in our hearts the desire to unite ourselves forever to the family of Saints, in which already now we have the grace to partake. As a famous spiritual song says: “Oh when the Saints come marching in, oh how I want to be in that number!” May this beautiful aspiration burn within all Christians!

BENEDICT XVI.
Angelus, 1/11/2008



November 1 – Solemnity of All Saints

Sanctity: The Axis of History



✠ Fr. Ignacio Montojo, EP

*Those who
remain
faithful to
the mark
received at
Baptism are
the ones who
determine
divine
interventions
in events*

The excerpts from the Word of God chosen by the Holy Church for the Liturgy of this solemnity can help us to contemplate history in a way very different from the tedious succession of dates and facts that we learn in school.

Yes, because this great process that unfolds under God's gaze, from creation to the end of the world, has as its axis precisely those who are commemorated today: the saints.

In the first reading, taken from the Book of Revelation, the words of the Angel show how God anticipates or postpones His intervention depending on whether "the servants of our God" (Rv 7:3), marked on their foreheads with a mysterious sign, are prepared – a fact which renders any human "feat" completely insignificant.

This may well symbolize the character of the baptized. If we knew how to give due value to the great gift of love that the Father has given us, of being His children (cf. 1 Jn 1), we would fear nothing and be discouraged by nothing in the face of the adversities presented by the contemporary world to those who wish to remain faithful to the call for holiness inherent to the Sacrament of Baptism.

Although our surrender to God is threatened at every moment by the countless solicitations for evil that surround us, the Responsorial Psalm emphasizes that the Lord's blessing descends upon

those "whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean" (Ps 23:4). If we seek to be like this, we will be part of the handful of the righteous who play a decisive role in divine interventions in the events of history.

These events always lead to the victory of righteousness, even though appearances occasionally indicate the opposite. The Mystical Body of Christ is called to grow constantly in grace, as manifested by the varied and new forms of holiness that it has produced over the centuries. And it is the union between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant that compels this progress, whereby, at the end of the world, the Heavenly Jerusalem will descend to earth, making time to give way to eternity.

How can we participate in such a marvel? In this valley of tears, this is impossible without great tribulations (cf. Rv 7:14)... But in today's Gospel (cf. Mt 5:1-12a), the Divine Master teaches us that, even in the midst of difficulties, those who struggle with determination, for love of Him, already experience here something of the happiness of Heaven, which lifts them above ordinary men.

The paradigm for human relationships that Our Lord established in the Sermon on the Mount radically contradicted the customs of antiquity, both pagan and Jewish. However, detachment from earthly goods, love of suffering, meekness, thirst for holiness, mercy, purity of heart, and so many other values, elevated by Him to the category of beatitudes, had the effect of permeating humanity with sweetness, to the point of completely changing its physiognomy.

This sublime invitation also resounds for us to hear, urging us to embrace holiness with the same fervour that led so many brothers and sisters, who have gone before us with the sign of faith, to heavenly glory. We need only trust in the grace received at Baptism and accept all that God desires of each one of us. ✠



"Saints in adoration", by Jacopo de Cione - National Gallery, London

The Day to Help Those Who Have Left Us



✠ Fr. Isoldino José Quintão, EP

The Church can be compared to a magnificent palace with three interconnected levels.

On the highest level is the Church Triumphant, in which the saints – those who did violence to Heaven (cf. Mt 11:12), entered “by the narrow door” (Lk 13:24) and heard the sweet call: “enter into the joy of your Master” (Mt 25:21) – share the blessed company of Jesus Christ, Mary Most Holy and the Angels.

On the ground floor of the palace, the Church Militant fights, as Job said: “*Militia est vita hominis super terram* – The life of man upon earth is a warfare” (Jb 7:1). The heroes of this permanent combat configure themselves to Christ and will be admitted into the society of the Angels and saints in Heaven.

The less “diligent” ones, who just “passed”, and did not fulfil the mandate to be perfect (cf. Mt 5:48), constitute the Church Suffering. They are in Purgatory, which they will not leave until they have paid “the last penny” (Mt 5:26).

It is for this reason that the Church established the Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed on November 2, a celebration instituted by St. Odilo of Cluny in 998, with the intention of praying in a special way for the deceased who still suffer in Purgatory, to thus alleviate their suffering.

Through the sacrosanct means of the Communion of Saints, the blessed communicate with the faithful of the Church Militant and with those still

being purified in Purgatory. In the same way, the faithful on earth can communicate with the saints in Heaven, beseeching their help in the struggles of this world, and with the members of the Church Suffering, asking them for small favours and offering prayers and suffrages to shorten their sufferings.

The first penitentiary in Brazil was called the *Court House of Correction*. Its threefold purpose was to punish offenders, correct them, and reintegrate them into society. Now, if life in earthly society has its laws, all the more so, in the eternal dwellings, is “nothing unclean” (Rv 21:27) permitted. When the likeness to Christ, which is the first requirement for life in Heaven, is not achieved in this life, it must be completed in the “house of correction” of the heavenly court, where a purifying fire cleanses souls of false human criteria.

After death, the soul contrasts its miseries with the infinite perfection of Christ, and the splendour of His beauty communicates to it the desire to be purified in the restorative flames of Purgatory. There, certain of its salvation, it finds peace, knowing that it is “in God’s grace and friendship.”¹

Meditate, then, on your last things (cf. Sir 7:40), so that the day when you go to God may be a day of celebration and joy, not of weeping and lamentation. ✠

On the day when the Church Militant prays especially for those who are being purified in the fire of Purgatory, let us reflect on the perfection we must attain in order to see God face to face

¹ CCC 1030.

Souls in Purgatory - Chapel of the souls, Santiago de Compostela (Spain)



Francisco Lecaros

Venerable and Symbolic Stones



✠ Fr. Rafael Schindler, EP

The consideration of Christianity's temple par excellence reminds us that we are "stones" of the Church

Just as people receive Baptism, sacred buildings are also “baptized” or, to use more appropriate terms, consecrated or dedicated to God. If there is a ritual to bless family homes, why should there not be something similar for buildings intended for divine worship?

The Temple of Jerusalem – erected to house the Ark of the Covenant and to be a place of blessing for the people of Israel – was built and dedicated by King Solomon amid supernatural wonders and grand ceremonies (cf. 2 Chr 5-7).

In our era, the emperor Constantine donated the place where the Popes established their seat of government, a combination of palace and cathedral. Its dedication – the first in Church history – occurred seventeen centuries ago, on November 9, 324. On that occasion, Pope St. Sylvester entitled it Holy Saviour, a name completed in the 13th century with that of St. John

the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. It is now known as the Papal Basilica of St. John Lateran.

There, remarkable graces poured forth upon Romans and pilgrims, and important councils were held. Its walls also housed precious relics and works of art of inestimable value. But not everything in its history was splendid: the basilica experienced earthquakes, pillaging, fires and terrible neglect during the period the Popes resided in Avignon. Like the Church itself, the Basilica endured storms, and like her, always remained standing, majestic and maternal.

However, to consider the essential aspect of this feast, let us focus our attention on a teaching of St. Paul that is undoubtedly much more significant than the dedication of a temple, however venerable it may be: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy” (1 Cor 3:16-17).

The profound reality is that the material construction of a temple symbolizes the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and the holy people of God, built with living and chosen stones: the souls of the baptized.

Thus, theology, history and allegory come together to sing the glories of the Lateran Basilica, mother and head of the churches of Rome and the whole world.

One last reflection, of a pastoral nature, is in order. Today’s Gospel (cf. Jn 2:13-22) tells us that Jesus, with a whip in His hands, purged the Temple of Jerusalem, which had become a house of commerce.

And our souls... are they not in need of purification?

With sacramental absolution – never with a whip – the Lord is pleased to forgive us in Confession, and with the Bread of Life He sustains us in our life of faith. Having been “Consecrated” by Baptism, purified by Reconciliation and strengthened by the Eucharist, we will truly be living stones of the Church. ✠

Views of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Rome



Gustavo Kraij

Antoine Tavenaux (CC-by-sa 3.0)

The End of My World



✠ Fr. Thiago Geraldo, EP

Two moments are crucial in a man's existence: his birth and his departure from this world. The banished children of Eve experience exceptional rest in both circumstances: upon entering life, the child is placed in a cradle, a place associated with hope for what it will become in the future; upon leaving the earthly condition, we all receive a coffin, a "dwelling" linked to the memory of our achievements.

All human history must be interpreted in terms of its end: the judgement in which God will separate the wicked from the good, and will punish some and reward others, according to their works (cf. Rom 2:6).

When, on the Tuesday before His Passion, the Redeemer left the Temple of Jerusalem for the last time, His disciples marveled at the beauty of that edifice, which had been rebuilt by Herod over forty years. The white marble, adorned with the perennial brilliance of gold, showed all its magnificence under the last rays of the setting sun.

Based on this act of merely human admiration – for the external opulence of the building concealed the infidelity rampant within it – the Divine Master urged them to consider the end: "All that you see here – the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down" (Lk 21:6).

He announced with prophetic words the end of a world.

In fact, Jesus' statement touched on two areas of particular interest: the end of the Temple in Jerusalem and the end of the world. His words remain mysterious until today, but this Sunday's readings make it sufficiently clear that Our Lord's intention was to prepare us for the end.

History has already witnessed the "end of many worlds". One need only recall the twilight of the Greek or Roman empires. Even in the third century, St. Cyprian of Carthage

unveiled the sign of the times that heralded the end of his world:

"There is a lack of farmers in the fields, sailors on the seas, soldiers in the barracks, honesty in the forum, justice in the courts, solidarity in friendships, skill in the arts, discipline in customs"...¹

Taking into account the current state of our world, one can conjecture that Providence is already preparing a new cradle of hope for the civilization that is to be born of authentic love for the Kingdom of God.

The true vision of history analyses everything in terms of its protagonist, who is the Saviour, and His Mystical Body, the Church. In order not to share the fate of the Temple of Jerusalem, let us have Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of our spiritual edifice. By doing so, we will hear the comforting words of the Redeemer:

"Not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives" (Lk 21:18-19).. ✠

¹ ST. CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE. *Ad Demetrianum*, c.3: PL 4, 546.



"Siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus", by David Roberts - Private collection

The disciples' admiration for the Temple in Jerusalem gives rise to prophetic words from the Redeemer about the end of "the" world and the end of "a" world. The advice they received is also addressed to us

The King's Victory and the Sceptic's Defeat

✠ Fr. Mario Beccar Varela, EP



The sceptics may sneer. But the sneer of sceptics has never been able to deter the victorious march of those who have faith,” stated Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. And reading the Gospel chosen for this solemnity (cf. Lk 23:35-43) we exclaim in the same vein: the impious may mock the Divine Crucified One, but they will finally witness how splendidous His Reign will be!

From the height of the Cross, facing the insults and sarcasm of the insolent mob, Our Lord kept a silence filled with dignity. His closed lips, however, had awe-inspiring eloquence. It was as if He were saying to those who insulted Him: “The day will come when facts will be my triumphant reply.”

Pilate himself unintentionally confirmed Jesus’ royalty with the inscription that so displeased the Jews. Neither could have imagined that the Kingdom of this “defeated One” would be eternal, established by a crushing victory over His enemies.

Even less could they have conceived how solid and effective this reign would be: He would reign over hearts. He would not conquer power by arms, but by love, and only those who were bound to Him by this bond would enter the Kingdom of the Crucified Lord.

Opportunists, like the bad thief, who sought only his physical comfort, would be excluded. Once again, silence would be the answer to those who sought to enter His Kingdom for spurious motives or material gain.

But – oh, marvel of divine mercy! – complete innocence would

not be required to be admitted to the Kingdom of Christ. The doors are open to contrite and humbled hearts, and to corroborate this comforting truth, Our Lord chose to convey it through a moving episode.

By the conversion of a thief condemned to death, followed by a dialogue between the two crucified men, He showed that the King of Heaven welcomes with open arms those who humble themselves, acknowledge their faults, and ask for forgiveness.

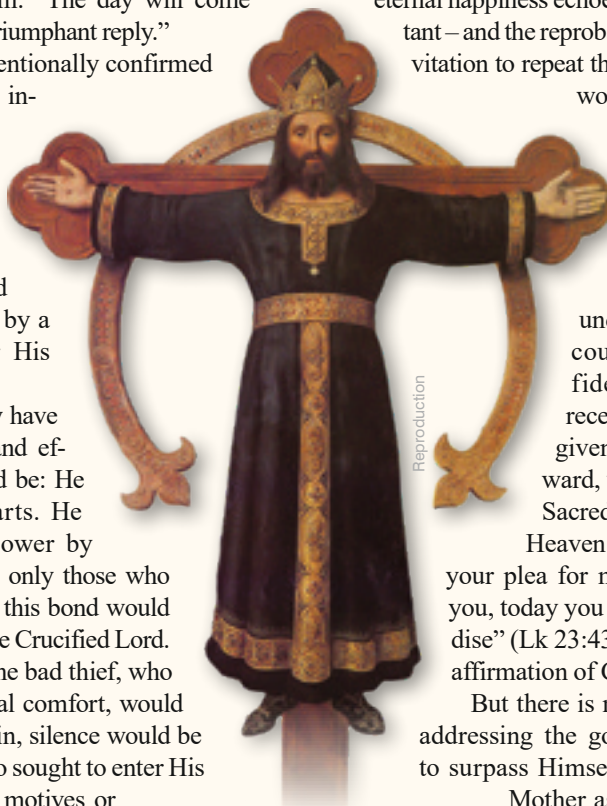
The loving and compassionate sentence that decreed the former bandit’s immediate admission to eternal happiness echoes in the ears of the repentant – and the reprobates – of all time, as an invitation to repeat the request of the one who would be the first in history to be “canonized”:

“Jesus, remember me when You come into your Kingdom” (Lk 23:42).

O souls who labour under the burden of your countless sins: have confidence! If the good thief received such complete forgiveness and such a great reward, why doubt that the same Sacred Heart that took him to

Heaven will not eagerly answer your plea for mercy? “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). This is the resounding affirmation of Christ’s kingship.

But there is more. Immediately after addressing the good thief, Jesus wanted to surpass Himself: He gave us His own Mother as our Mother! Oh, wonder of mercy and goodness: His Kingdom would be a maternal kingdom! ✠



“Christ on the Cross”, by Piero di Cosimo - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

How could the Kingdom of One Crucified become effective? The answer, divine and triumphant, would not delay

Let Us Enter the Ark of the Holy Church!



✠ Fr. Celio Luís Casale, EP

Advent is the phase of the Liturgical Year “especially devoted to recollection, to a discreet compunction, and to the thrilling hope of the great joy that the birth of the Messiah will bring. Thus, everyone prepared to welcome the Child-God who, in the virginal maternal sanctuary, drew closer, day by day, to the blessed moment when He would begin His salvific dwelling with humanity.”¹

The Church desires that we prepare ourselves duly for this sublime moment, purging habits and customs not in keeping with Christian life.

The Liturgy of this First Sunday of Advent seems to seek to literally shake us from the lethargy into which humanity is progressively sinking. “It is the hour now for you to awake from sleep” (Rom 13:11), St. Paul exclaims. Do you not see that “the day is at hand” (Rom 13:12)?

What day? The day of reckoning! And so that there are no excuses or doubts about what to do, he declares: “not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and lust, not in rivalry and jealousy” (Rom 13:13b). Oh! How our era needs to hear these truths!

However, the Apostle of the Gentiles’ warning seems to fall on deaf ears. Indeed, in every age the carefree and optimistic abound...

Carefree were those who, before the deluge, as Our Lord recalls in this Sunday’s Gospel, “were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (Mt 24:38), without heeding God’s call to conversion. Fools! Soon Noah would enter the ark, the doors would be closed, and curtains of water would cover the heavens, flooding the earth. Their unbridled desire to enjoy life caused them to rapidly lose what they held dearest. The greater good had been foolishly sacrificed for fleeting pleasure.

The Son of Man will visit us in the near or distant future. When? We do not know. Of one thing, however, we are certain: He will come when we least expect Him...

In reality, knowing the day of the Lord’s coming matters little. The crucial question that comes to mind is: will I be prepared for this encounter? Will I be saved, or not? A decisive question, that makes anyone who honestly seeks God tremble.

If I am not concerned about what should most concern me – my salvation – I am no different from those optimists of Noah’s time! “Our natural propensity is to believe that we are secure on this earth forever and, as a result, to ignore that we live here in a state of trial.”²

“Let us” then, “conduct ourselves properly” (Rom 13:13a) to not be caught off guard when the Son of Man comes. To this end, let us begin now – not tomorrow – our process of conversion. And if, by chance, our conscience accuses us of something, we should hasten to seek pardon. Let us clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ, and place ourselves in the most pure hands of her who is the Mother of Mercy. And let us enter the Ark of the Holy Church forever, where it will always be day! ✠

Given the approaching advent of the Saviour, we must ask ourselves: how is my soul’s relationship with Him progressing?

¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. No “crepúsculo” do Sol de Justiça [In the “twilight” of the Sun of Justice]. In: *Folha de São Paulo*. São Paulo. Year LVII. No.18.170 – Jan. 1, 1979), p.3.

² CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. Vigilance: A Forgotten Virtue? In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, v.I, p.18.

“The evening of the Flood”, by John Martin (edited) - Victoria and Albert Museum, Lonon





A Serene Sunset and the Dawn of a New Relationship

Like the sun that, as it sets, casts its most beautiful rays, Msgr. João's last months on this earth were the corollary and quintessence of his life, as well as the dawn of a new form of closeness between him and his spiritual children.

✠ Sr. Clara Isabel Morazzani



"I hope that, despite my miseries, the Sacred Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Our Lady, St. Joseph, my Guardian Angel, Dr. Plinio, Dona Lucilia, and all my intercessors will help me and do in me, with me, and beyond me all that I should do to fulfil my mission entirely.

"And I hope for – and have always desired – a serene death full of consolation; as I believe I will be able to see, at the moment of death, that the work has flourished, and will endure through the centuries and millennia until the end of the world."¹

It was January of the year 2000. One of the spiritual sons of the then Mr. João Clá, eager to partake in the designs and perspectives that filled the heart of his founder, took advantage of the atmosphere of intimacy created during a meal to ask him about his hopes for himself in the future.

The answer was simple, quick and without hesitation. However, today those words take on the character of a prognostication already fulfilled.

A serene and gradual sunset

Looking back on Msgr. João's journey over the course of his eighty-five years, one sees how many battles he won, how many challenges he over-

came, how many arduous missions he carried out with complete success! Like a star traversing the firmament from one end to the other, he illuminated history, leaving behind him the indelible trail of a fascinating, mysterious and admirable personality.

How was, then, the serene twilight of this luminary, whose existence was a reproach to the wicked (cf. Wis 2:14) and a mainstay for godliness in an age of wickedness (cf. Sir 49:3)?

Just as the sun casts its most beautiful rays when it sets, painting the horizon with radiant colours, so too were Msgr. João's last months on this earth the corollary and quintessence of his entire life.

Weakened by a stroke – a cerebrovascular accident – suffered fourteen years earlier, but remaining always cheerful, he began slowly and solemnly to withdraw, lessening his attendance at public occasions over time, and decreasing the tireless contact he had kept up with his spiritual children. Even this way of proceeding manifested his invariably consideration for others, as he gradually accustomed them to his absence so that his passing would be less painful.

On the evening of June 2, 2024, at the time when he would usually retire, he surprised those who were attending him

with a request to proceed to his private chapel. Once there, he settled into an armchair and remained awake the whole night, until at dawn he asked for the first Mass of the day to be celebrated.

What happened during that silent but most eloquent colloquy with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Was it a sort of "vigil of arms"? Did he sense that his life was coming to an end? Or rather, that his journey was about to begin?

Perhaps we will only know on Judgement Day or in eternity, but what is certain is that during that unforgettable night-watch he appeared serene and joyful, like someone who had received wonderful news.

Joy and affection amid suffering

A week after this episode, Msgr. João took to his bed, never to rise again. Initially struck down with pneumonia, his health deteriorated over the months, with slight improvements and new complications, the ups and downs inherent to such a delicate situation.

Innumerable sufferings, great and small, assailed him: exhaustion, thirst and privation of oral nourishment, digestive disturbances, immobility, sleepless nights, difficulty breathing, frequent choking, constant changing of needles and bandages...

Amidst so many discomforts, he never uttered a complaint or a lament, nor did he even inquire about the causes of his illness or the prognosis for recovery. Rather, he accepted everything as if it were happening to a third party; actually, with less interest, because if it were someone else's suffering, he would have been truly concerned, with his usual solicitude in relation to others.

Throughout the five months he remained bedridden, there were countless expressions of affection towards his children. Whether through a gaze, a smile or a squeeze of the hand, or taking an interest in their occupations or ensuring that they fulfilled their

duties of piety, he invariably expressed contentment with their presence.

Those who knew Msgr. João know that it was the heart of a father that beat in his breast, vibrant with love for the good of others. And this desire to sanctify souls was translated, above all, into the desire – a characteristic trait of his spirituality – to convince them that they were loved by God. Realizing that he would soon depart, he certainly sought to make the most of the time he had left to demonstrate this, with greater intensity than in the years since his stroke.

His expressive eyes also acquired a new depth, in two senses: both in the perceptibility of his vast interior horizon and in the penetrating manner he looked upon those around him. It was enough for someone to cross the threshold of his room to be immediately enveloped by the affability of that gaze, which seemed to want to instill goodness, bringing to mind a comment by Dr. Plinio about him:

“You have very large eyes and, when you open them, you tend to open them very wide. Only those who have endured long periods of solitude do so. [...] In your case, whenever the best movements of your soul occur, you open them entirely.”²

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary, until the end!

However, while Msgr. João analysed everything that happened around him, his attention was intensified when the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated each day in his room. Even when tired or sleepy, or even afflicted by some malaise, he never forfeited the Mass, sometimes repeating the prayers with the celebrant, other times accompanying the hymns. And his fervour increased as the Communion time approached...

The Eucharistic faith acquired by little João in his encounter with the Blessed Sacrament exposed when he was four years old, which was later strengthened by the graces of First Communion and confirmed in 1956

by his resolve never to miss a Communion in his life, now reached its fullness. And Providence, perhaps wishing to seal this alliance, arranged for him to receive the Sacred Species for the last time on October 31, the date that marked the seventy-sixth anniversary of his First Communion!

On the eve of that day, at twilight, Msgr. João turned at a certain moment toward his left and, pointing with a nod of his head to one of the numerous statues of Our Lady that adorned the walls of his room, exclaimed in a loud voice: “Mary!” The image he indicated was brought to him, and he contemplated it for a long while, kissing it several times.

A few hours later, he repeated the same request and kissed the image again with devotion. Finally, he raised his bed until he was practically in a sitting position and kept his eyes wide open, remaining like this throughout the night and the following day, without even dozing off.

On the morning of the 31st, when greeted by one of his attendants, he tried to respond with “Salve Maria”, but his voice failed and he could only manage to articulate a faint “Maria”. The name of the Mother of God would thus be his last word... A beautiful summary of a life consumed in love for the Virgin of virgins, expressed by a soul who, on earth, only “breathed” Mary!³

However, far from being merely the end of his journey, by pronouncing her name, Msgr. João bequeathed his testament to the work he had founded and left behind him “an open door, which no one is able to shut” (Rv 3:8): only in union with the Mother of mercy will we follow the paths of virtue and thus prepare ourselves for Heaven!

Finally... at the very limit!

That same day, the 31st – which would be his last – passed as was usual during those final months, with the difference that Msgr. João communicated little. He attended Holy Mass with his customary devotion.



Teresita Morazzani

The name of the Mother of God would be his last word... A beautiful summary of a life consumed in love for the Virgin of virgins, a soul who, on earth, only “breathed” Mary!

The statue Msgr. João venerated on October 30

After midnight, as the first hours of November 1 began to unfold, Msgr. João showed signs that his body, which he had so willingly exerted in his dedication to the ideals of the Church, was expending its last energies.

Spiritual sons and daughters surrounded his bed, desiring that he might depart from their arms to those of Our Lady, and pass from the manifestations of filial tenderness to the effusions of the infinite torrent of love from the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Msgr. João's expression was one of unalterable serenity, showing at the same time how fully conscious he was and how he could hear everything that was said to him.

This peace, in turn, radiated to all present: there was no sign of discouragement from those around him, no uncontrolled sobbing, no frantic agitation. There reigned, instead, an atmosphere of solemn recollection, of balanced and respectful emotion.

It then occurred to one of his priest sons to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice. Everything was immediately organized and Mass began. It is even difficult to specify the exact moment when his soul left his body, such was the gentleness with which he faded away, like a wick that, as it burns, melts the wax entirely.

At the Offertory, however, while the celebrant prepared the bread and wine, offering to the Father the species that would be transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, his presence was no longer felt among them ...

Considering the grandeur of this moment, the filial tongue is at a loss for adequate terms, and turns, once again, to the words of Dr. Plinio, spoken several decades earlier:

"One of the best traits of our dear João's soul is this: there is something immeasurable about him, but immeasurable in a healthy way, immeasurable in a splendid way. [...] He is always – and how I admire this position – at the extreme limits of himself.

"‘The measure of loving God,’ said St. Bernard, ‘consists in loving Him without measure.’"

We really ought to have something unlimited, something that is constantly pointing to an extreme limit that we never reach but towards which we must always strive, and which we will only have reached when, upon breathing our last breath, we first kiss Our Lady's feet."

Yes, the soul of Msgr. João – great, immense, almost boundless and always effervescent with love – had finally reached that "extreme limit"! Or rather, the boundless vastitudes of eternity, for which he had so longed on this earth, had opened before him!

"Saudades": the pinnacle of human vision, bringing us closer to divine vision

According to the superficial, positivist and pragmatic vision of the modern world, everything would seem to be over. He who had been a sun to his children and had shone before their eyes with the intensity of midday had disappeared into a seemingly dark and hopeless horizon...

What remained? A void impossible to fill? How would his disciples fare without the joyful and lively presence of their beloved guide? Would his work, built at the cost of so many sacrifices, fade away for lack of the unparalleled impulse that only he was capable of providing?

For those who knew Msgr. João, it is easy to find the answer to such questions, for if, on one hand, it is true that, in the words of Scripture, "The righteous man who had died will condemn the ungodly who are living" (Wis 4:16), it is also certain – and even more so – that "the fruit of noble struggles is a glorious one; and unfailing is the root of understanding" (Wis 3:15).

Although that light seemed to have waned inexorably, there remained a warmth of soul full of longings; there remained the strength and vitality that

he had so efficaciously spread; there remained so many other torches, lit by the fire of his spirit, which would continue to burn, intent on inflaming the face of the earth with a fire of love.

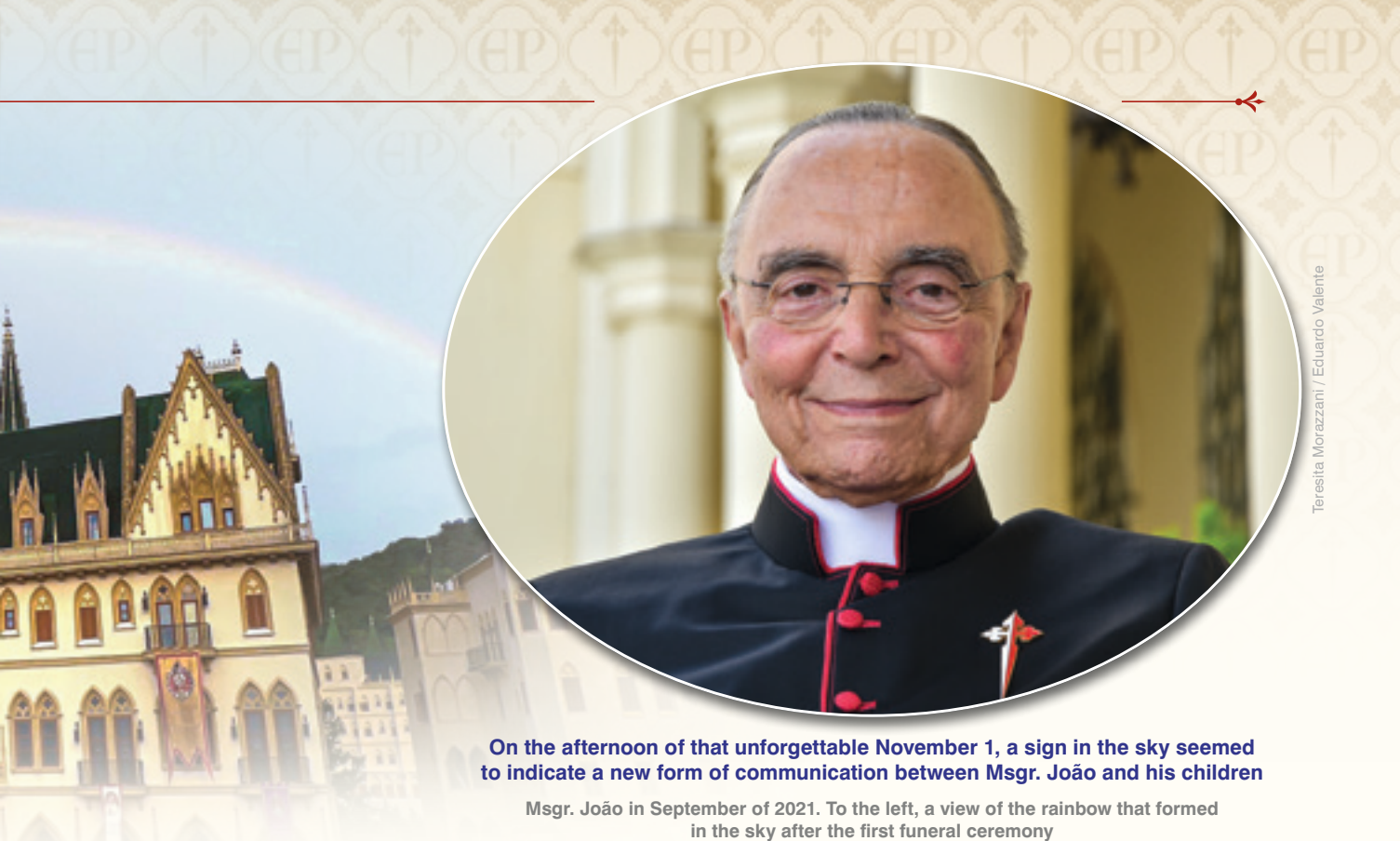
Thus, when the faint glimmers of dawn on that first Friday of November began to pierce the darkness of night, the gentle voice of grace whispered in the hearts of all, in unison: "God did not make death, and He does not delight in the death of the living. [...] For righteousness is immortal" (Wis 1:13, 15).

Having accompanied their father in his suffering, it was now imperative for all the sons and daughters who wanted to be faithful to follow him beyond the vastness that separates time and eternity, and to climb the heights of the supernatural perspective, with their gaze toward the future, as he had taught them:

"For man, there exists the past, the present and the future, but in God there is no past or future; everything is present.

"One way for man to participate in this divine perspective, in which the





On the afternoon of that unforgettable November 1, a sign in the sky seemed to indicate a new form of communication between Msgr. João and his children

Msgr. João in September of 2021. To the left, a view of the rainbow that formed in the sky after the first funeral ceremony

past and the future unite, lies in the summation of a memory of the past, of a contentment with the present, but above all, of the hope and expectation of an unending fulfilment of that which is to come, in a perpetual and eternal synthesis.

[...] “True *saudade*, with a capital ‘S’, is much more turned towards the future than the past, and it gives man the possibility of participating, already in this life, in the joys of eternity. So *saudade* is a kind of pinnacle of human vision, one which best represents God’s vision of all realities.”⁶

An arc spanning time and eternity

On the afternoon of that unforgettable November 1, 2024, just after the

first official funeral ceremony had ended, a bright rainbow appeared in the sky, framing the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary where Msgr. João’s body was lying in repose.

Was this a pleasant surprise prepared by him to console the children he loved so much? A sign of Providence showing them the new form of communication they should establish with their father, the means of shortening the distance by spanning an arc between time and eternity?

Words spoken by Msgr. João himself in 2002, on the occasion of a farewell, answer these questions and are now more relevant than ever, like a guarantee and an affectionate promise:

“We will all die, but death will be the condition for us to live together eternally [...], in the contemplation of God face to face, and in the love of God above all things, loving Him as He loves Himself and loving one another all the more, because of our love for Him and our understanding of Him.

“So instead of being sad at the time of parting, we should rejoice, [...] for we are drawing nearer to the day when there will be no morning, no evening, and no night, but only eternity together.

“May Our Lady sanctify you in my absence, so that, when I return, I may find you all even more prepared to be a source of rest, joy and satisfaction to me.”⁷ ❖

¹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Conversation*. São Paulo, 2/1/2000.

² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Conversation*. São Paulo, 3/12/1978.

³ Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNON DE MONTFORT. *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, n.217. In: *Œuvres Complètes*. Paris: Du Seuil, 1966, p.634.

⁴ ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. *Tratado sobre el amor*

a Dios, c.VI, n.16. In: *Obras Completas*. 2.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1993, v.I, p.323.

⁵ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Conversation*. São Paulo, 7/8/1980.

⁶ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Conversation*. Ubatuba, 27/7/2004.

⁷ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Conversation*. Mairiporã, 11/9/2002.

Closing the Distance Between Heaven and Earth

Once the threshold of eternity had been crossed, the question inevitably arose: was this the end or the beginning of our close contact? ...

✠ **Elizabete Fátima Astorino**



Sunday morning, November 3, the final hours of farewell. Slowly and solemnly, the queue advances towards Msgr. João's coffin. Thousands of people have already filed serenely down the main aisle to pay their last respects. That man had marked their hearts forever. Requests, thanks and kisses – there is no set formula for saying goodbye to such a beloved father. They leave their filial hearts behind, and go with their souls set on the hope of reunion...

The clock reads three minutes past eleven when Dr. Augusto Goedert, a resident physician in Curitiba who is currently at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary in Caieiras (SP), feels his mobile phone vibrate in his pocket. He does not even consider answering it, as he is kissing Msgr. João's hands and making his requests.

A few kilometres away, Mrs. Fernanda Rodrigues Dias dos Reis is in the midst of a terrible crisis: her youngest daughter, Ana Catarina, only one year and nine months old, has choked on some milk and all efforts to get her breathing again are in vain...

Seven minutes without breathing

"I was desperate. Ana was losing colour, turning purple, with a very dark mouth and purple arms too. She was limp in my lap... I shouted to my children: 'Get the relics! Get the relics!'" recalls Fernanda.

What was she referring to? She was using this popular and imprecise term to refer to simple objects that had been touched to Msgr. João's body the day before, especially a rosary. While her children ran to fetch them, she and a friend made emergency calls: to the ambulance, to the child's father, who was away, and to Dr. Goedert...

A few minutes later, Dr. Goedert returned the missed call, gave the necessary instructions for the case, and immediately set out to go to the place where Ana Catarina was. However... as a physician, he knew he would not arrive in time to help her and asked Msgr. João to do so, since the problem of distances no longer existed for him.

Ana Catarina spent approximately seven minutes without breathing, livid and unconscious before her distraught mother and siblings. Fernanda continues the story: "The children brought the 'relics', I placed them on Ana Catarina's chest and cried out in great distress: 'Msgr. João, bring her back! Bring her back!'" The girl then sighed and began to respond.

From this terrible episode, whose happy ending lacks a plausible medical explanation given the considerable time the girl remained unconscious and not breathing, she suffered no sequelae. In fact, all that remained of the event, for that family, was the memory of their spiritual father's immediate help.

Thus began the reports of similar graces, which belied all appearances of an irreparable separation.

A telephone call... from eternity

The following day, November 4, during the thanksgiving after morning Mass, Mr. Raphaël Six, a member of the Heralds of the Gospel who lived in the house that was Monsignor João's last residence, asked him for a grace and a sign that it would be granted.

Once the celebration was over, he began his daily activities: "I then heard the library phone ring and went to the reception desk to answer it. Imagine my surprise when I read the caller's name on the display: 'Msgr. João Clá'! I answered it, thinking a priest must be calling from Msgr.'s office; however, the call dropped..."

Having made the necessary inquiries to discover who might have used that extension, Raphaël was able to confirm that no one had made the phone call and consequently realized that Msgr. João had given him the requested sign.

Chalice recovered six months after theft

The response to the request made by Fr. Antonio Castro Hernando, EP, residing in Argentina, arrived in a somewhat different way. This priest needed to have his chalice restored, and a couple



of Heralds' Cooperators offered to do it in Peru. However, before it arrived there, the sacred vessel was stolen...

Fr. Hernando recounts: "I asked for the intercession of Msgr. João to recover the chalice, celebrating Masses for this intention, especially so that it would not be an object of any sacrilege or profanation. The tertiaries also helped with their prayers, but to no avail. It seemed that Monsignor was not hearing us or, for reasons of higher wisdom, did not want to attend us."

Six months passed. One day, a young Argentine from the city of Santiago del Estero contacted the Heralds to report that he had seen a chalice, similar to those used by the institution's priests, in the hands of a homeless man, who asked a paltry sum for the return of the sacred object... It was the one that had been stolen! Having recovered it intact, the young man sent it back to Buenos Aires.

Two encounters in dreams

Many people have had dreams of Msgr. João. Although a strong subjective factor may play a role in this, "the tree is known by its fruits," and in the episodes recounted below, these brief communications were of great use for the progress in the supernatural life of those who received them.

From the Brazilian city of São Carlos, São Paulo State, Mrs. Kátia Vilas



Antonio Jungles

"The children brought the 'relics', I placed them on Ana Catarina's chest and cried out in great distress: 'Msgr. João, bring her back! Bring her back!'"

Fernanda with her husband and children; she is holding her youngest, Ana Catarina. Above, a scene from the exequies of Msgr. João, on November 1, 2024

Boas Gonçalves writes to us. In her message, she recounts the thoughts that came to her mind as she bid farewell to Msgr. João in his coffin: the first time she saw him twelve years earlier; the pain of not having spent more time with that father; the regret of perhaps only truly believing in this spiritual paternity when he was already gone...

The story continues: "This happens to a lot of children: they miss their father when he's gone... That night, I lay down to sleep feeling guilty for not having loved him as much as he deserved. Sleep came, and with it Monsignor. I cried in his arms, in the coffin, and he sat up. He was happy and had colour in his cheeks; he told me to be calm and that all was well. I asked

him for advice, and he told me to remain firm in my devotion to Our Lady and pray the Rosary. He lay back down in the coffin, and I woke feeling on my arms the pressure of that embrace. My heart was filled with enthusiasm and joy; all the anguish had vanished!"

Msgr. João embraces some; he warns others...

This is the truly shocking case of Mr. Remy Adalberto Rodríguez Jerez, from the Dominican Republic, saved from death by a reprimand from Msgr. João.

The event took place in the early hours of April 6. While sleeping, Remy saw himself in a famous Santo Domingo nightclub called Jet Set, where various circumstances were inciting him to sin. On another plane of



Warning some and comforting others, Msgr. João attended all with fatherly affection

From left to right, Kátia with her husband and children; Remy and his family; Kauane and her family at the time of Msgr. João's exequies

the dream, Msgr. João was celebrating Mass:

"Monsignor was at the altar during the elevation of the Host after the Consecration. He stopped for a moment and stared at me. But it was not a look of contempt, more of a look of caution, as if to say, 'Be careful! What are you doing, Remy?'" He wanted to protect me; he was there to prevent me from committing any sin."

Upon waking, Remy, who had considered attending an all-night party with his wife at that very place, decided not to go. And it was thanks to this that he avoided losing his life along with the 236 people who died in the early morning when the nightclub's roof collapsed...

Just as in life, Msgr. João remains steadfast against evil, never allowing his children to concede anything to the enemy!

"I'll take care of you!"

But Msgr. João does not need to make use of dreams in order to express himself. All it takes, as in the case described below, is a glance.

One night, while praying the Rosary with her husband, Mrs. Kauane Tobias began to feel excruciating pain in her leg, a consequence of bone cancer she had been battling for some time. The pain intensified, and the usual medications were ineffective.

As her prayers mingled with tears, Kauane gazed at a photograph of Msgr. João that she kept in her room:

"When I looked at the photograph, I received a great grace, such a great grace... I heard Monsignor saying to me: 'My little daughter, I'll take care of you!' I stopped praying and began to cry... I am the only child of a single mother, and in that moment, I experienced a paternal love I had never experienced before! The pain immediately passed!"

Small requests... generous attention

For Mrs. Jeannet de Injoque, a cooperator of the Heralds in Peru, the news of her founder's passing was accompanied by a supernatural joy at the thought that she now had a new intercessor. This cured her of the severe depression she had been suffering due to the death of her husband a few years earlier.

Thus strengthened, she did not hesitate to ask Msgr. João to help her overcome another trial, this time a material one: "I was going through a somewhat difficult financial situation, and I was worried about some outstanding debts. I had some pieces of land for sale, and that morning I asked Monsignor to help me sell at least one of them."

That same afternoon, someone approached her, interested in buying a property, and she made the payment immediately!

For her part, I. R. prayed for the conversion of her son, who had fallen into alcoholism since adolescence: "As soon as Msgr. João passed away, I took a photograph of him and asked him, with great confidence, to intervene in this difficult situation. I didn't just want my son to stop drinking; I wanted to see him renewed. This was one of my daily requests to Monsignor. The days went by, until I began to notice a different behaviour in my son."

Taking advantage of the change to insist on the need to give up that addiction, in a conversation, I. R. heard from the boy that for some time he had been unable to drink alcoholic beverages, as it caused him to feel nauseous... And, to complete his mother's joy, he expressed his desire to seek the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Mrs. Renata Amorim, a Brazilian living in Canada, had her prayer heard after visiting the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary with her family:

"I had the grace of praying before the tomb of Msgr. João. There, I made my petitions with faith and hope, especially regarding my health. I suffer from endometriosis, a disease that profoundly affects both the body and mind, and which caused, among other complications, infertility. Previous tests had detected cysts in my ovaries. On November 12, 2024, we continued our journey to Fortaleza, and, as usual,



The gates of eternity did not limit the generosity of Msgr. João, who intercedes for his children before God's throne

From left to right: Renata with her husband and daughter; Sonia after her surgery

I underwent my routine checkups. To my surprise and joy, just a week after my visit to the basilica, the doctor informed me that the cysts had completely disappeared. It was a moment of great emotion for me and my family. Praise God!"

"He responds quickly!"

On November 21, 2024, Mrs. Marina Leanza Binotti prayed at the tomb of Msgr. João, asking for a Christmas present: that her mother, Sonia, receive a compatible kidney for transplant. The next day, they received a call from the Kidney Hospital in São Paulo, informing them of a donation!

However, after completing the compatibility tests, they learned that there was someone ahead in the transplant queue. In a state of great anguish, they awaited the final answer. Marina began to pray the Rosary, holding a photograph of Msgr. João and invoking his intercession.

With the "Amen" of the final Hail Mary, the news also came: the kidney would be donated to Sonia! Filled with gratitude, she left the photograph of Msgr. João with her mother and went to the admissions ward to begin the necessary paperwork.

In the waiting room where Sonia had remained, there was a couple in a very unhappy situation: Mr. Paulo César had just learned that three

people were ahead of him on the transplant list and, for the second time this year, he would lose the opportunity to receive a kidney. Seeing his dismay, Sonia went over to them with the photograph and, without even knowing Msgr. João's name, suggested to Paulo's wife: "Pray to him; he responds quickly!" Surprised but confident, the lady entrusted the case to Monsignor and was also immediately heard: shortly thereafter, a nurse announced that the transplant would be performed!

With the same promptness, help came to Mrs. Nathasha Borges, from the Brazilian city of Recife. A few days after a surgery, the silicone drain that had been implanted in her leg punctured the femoral artery, causing severe bleeding. The situation was extremely serious, and her chances of survival were slim, as under these circumstances, the bleeding can lead to death within five minutes. Nathasha survived for two long hours, despite having lost a third of her body's total blood!

Even while unconscious, she held on to a small piece of paper touched by Msgr. João, invoking his help: "I have no doubt regarding Monsignor's intercession, as I constantly held a 'relic' of his in my hands, asking him to intercede to save my life and help me accept God's will. [...] In another

city, fifty kilometres away, my mother, unaware of what was happening to me, saw Monsignor's photo appear on her cell phone twice. She was almost asleep and thought it was strange, as the phone does not have a screen saver. Then she heard: 'Get up and pray; your daughter is dying!'"

After being stabilized by the medical team, in a telephone conversation with her mother, Nathasha was fully convinced that Msgr. João was caring for her and had even informed her mother of what had happened, so she could join her daughter in prayer.

* * *

On the occasion of the first anniversary of Msgr. João's passing, we wanted to share with our readers this brief summary of favours obtained through his intercession, intending that they serve as a call to confidence for all those who wish to turn to him. It would also be necessary to mention the graces of conversion, the spiritual healing, and the interior favours he has granted in abundance, but they would not fit on all the pages of this issue...

We filially hope that the impetratory power of our father and founder, whose generosity was not limited by the gates of eternity, will find an ever-wider audience before the Throne of the Most High, where we long to one day meet him again! ✨

The Certainty of Victory

Of those who follow the prophetic path, Providence demands a special confidence in the midst of tribulation and difficulties: whatever happens, they must have the joy that comes from the conviction that God's cause will triumph!

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

Famous is the historical event that occurred with the *Grand Condé* in the battle against the Spanish army at Rocroi, when he took his command baton and pitched it into the enemy's midst to incite the French to win it back!



Francisco Lecaros

There are certain men, assisted by special charisms and gifts from God, who awaken in others an unshakable certainty of victory

Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé -
Palace of Versailles (France)

In this episode – which so pleased Dr. Plinio – a psychological phenomenon emerges: the soldiers, looking at the *Condé* and perceiving the breath that inspired him to make that move, were spurred on by the impetus that they would be victorious. If they did not have in their souls a “victory instinct,” fuelled above all by the panache, élan, and distinction of their commander, they would not have launched themselves into the opposing ranks...

Now, this effect of a purely natural order acquires unimaginable proportions when transposed to the supernatural realm. There are certain men, assisted by special charisms and gifts from God, who awaken in others a certainty of victory far greater than that of the *Condé* among his troops. In these moments, through the gaze of a man, one's entire being is sensibly taken over by a grace of confidence, and one advances!

The great trial of faith...

On the other hand, we must consider that, generally speaking, throughout the history of the Church, all those who have a specific calling – whether as members of a Religious Order or in some other mission of discipleship – undergo a very specific vocational trial, along the lines of the virtue of faith. The founder's paths are always to be tread by his followers; and if he

faced great perplexities, axiological trials, and apparent denials, they must necessarily follow the same path.

Let us take the ultimate example, from which all others flow: Our Lord Jesus Christ with His Apostles. What was the concrete trial that they had to undergo?

They had abandoned family, possessions, and profession to follow a Man full of vitality, strength, and presence, who called Himself the Son of God. The Master began to walk throughout Israel, inviting those He met: “Come after Me” or “Follow Me” (Mt 4:19; 9:9). And so, calling fishermen and tax collectors, He formed a group of twelve Apostles.

This new Prophet performed spectacular miracles, healing the blind, lepers, and paralytics, raising the dead, and drawing crowds after Him. Furthermore, He gave His disciples the same power to perform healings and cast out demons, teaching them a new doctrine, thanks to which they went from fishers of fish to fishers of men. They stood out in their own families and in Jewish society, to the point that the Gospel records that the mother of James and John, a relative of Our Lord, asked Him to grant the leading positions to her two sons when He re-established the kingdom (cf. Mt 20:20-21), since everyone assumed He was the Messiah and, therefore, the King of Israel.

However, such a hypothesis aroused fear not only in His fellow citizens – who did not accept Him – but also in those who held the temporal government, and for this reason they wanted to eliminate Him at all costs.

Three or four times they tried to arrest or stone Him, but He escaped their grasp. Finally, at a certain point, He was arrested, summarily tried, and handed over to the civil authorities, who scourged Him, condemned Him, and nailed Him to a Cross, on which He died.

Faced with such facts, we might ask ourselves: “Was it worthwhile for this Man to forfeit His future at the height of maturity, losing His life at the age of thirty-three?” Everything seemed to be over! His Apostles fled... Only one remained at the foot of the Cross, with His Mother and a few women!

For the disciples’ feeble souls, the Crucifixion was the great test of faith, under which they were not entirely faithful. Indeed, they were called to believe in the divinity of Our Lord, as the Son of the living God, and to surrender everything, with a view to establishing the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church as its ministers and highest authorities: “you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19:28).

...which continues even in victory

Nevertheless, the moment Our Lord cried out, “It is consummated!” and gave up His spirit was when it all began! The God-Man marked history, dividing it into two parts: before and after Christ. And the institution He founded was not only destined for victory, but would spread throughout the world and, according to His promise, be immortal (cf. Mt 16:18).

By rising by His own power, Jesus performed a miracle far greater than



Those without faith will not only succumb in the hour of trial, but will also be capable of questioning the very promise of victory

“The Resurrection”, by Jacopo di Cione - National Gallery, London

all those performed before and all those that would come after. A Man who, after being put to death in such a brutal and ignominious manner, returns to life thereby guarantees that His word is true.

But even in this case, those without faith are capable of questioning such a pledge of victory: what conclusive testimony did the Apostles present that their Master had risen? The stone that sealed the tomb had been removed and the sentries who guarded it had fallen to the ground? The latter were paid to spread the rumour that the disciples had stolen the Body...

The same is true of the Church. Our Lord gave thanks to His own for believing that institution was infallible and

would achieve total victory; but He left no obvious proof. How could He demonstrate the irreversibility of that work? Who could prove that the Good News would be preached to the ends of the earth, to every creature? It suffices to remember that official power among the chosen people was in the hands of the scribes, Pharisees, and chief priests who had ordered Jesus’ murder, creating continuous problems for the nascent Church, which would soon escalate into persecutions and martyrdoms.

The Bride of Christ, however, would traverse two thousand years and reach us! And she will still cross the ages until the end of the world.

How to face the axiological trial?

Now, this is the path that Providence usually demands of those children whom it wishes to use for some great mission: It reveals only signs of the success of the action undertaken, without providing categorical and irrefutable proof, for otherwise, what merit would those who embrace the cause of good have?

Even worse than the external obstacles are the internal trials that arise along this path, through which obstacles suddenly begin to appear that oppose precisely the hope, placed in the soul by grace, that everything would progress to glory. Other times, stuck in a routine, a person has the impression that all their predictions will not come true or, perhaps, will come true, but they personally will not see them fulfilled.

In these moments, what should be done? Ask for Our Lady’s help and face it! Those who walk the prophetic paths and, consequently, are often shaken in their axiology, must never allow this anti-axiology to undermine their conviction.

Therefore, whatever happens, in the midst of tribulation and difficulties, let



There is an interior whispering of the voice of grace in the depths of our souls, which becomes an extraordinary symphony, proclaiming: discipline, ceremonial, sacredness, prayer, wisdom, common sense, and “pulchrum” will return!

Msgr. João in December of 2004

us have the joy that comes from the conviction that God’s cause will prevail!

If a wall rises before us, it will open wide like a magnificent portal, and we will forge ahead; if a mountain stands in our way, it will be removed. If we must cross a sea dry-shod – even without having, like St. Peter, the eyes of Our Lord Jesus Christ to gaze upon – let us not focus our attention on the rolling mass of liquid, for once we take the first step, the waters will either dry up or become solid beneath our feet, and we will reach the end of the ocean.

Whether we are in the situation of Samson, alone against the Philistines, or that of Gideon, whose army was reduced until only three hundred men remained, let us not doubt! What matters above all is inner faith, born of union with God, through which we believe that our steps will be victorious.

And if, on the contrary, one of us is destined to give his life in battle, he will continue to fight on the other side, that is, in the supernatural field! By

maintaining this certainty, even if he dies tomorrow or tonight, he will have already participated in the victory!

How to define the certainty of victory?

Throughout history, there has always been a reason for hope for the good. In the Old Testament, there was the promise of the coming of the Messiah; in the New Testament, there is a wait for the fulfilment of the consequences of this advent, according to the words of St. Paul, later developed by Theology:

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now” (Rom 8:19-22).

If the Redemption was accomplished to save men and Angels, its effects equally affected the entire created order. And there will be a certain moment when the stars, mountains, lakes, and springs will be glorified as a result of the merits of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if we ascend to the highest vantage point on the globe and gaze at the horizon that stretches across it, we will witness, on the one hand, the chaos of the world: civilization has reached its final stage, in which there is no longer balance or common sense, no longer education, culture, or good manners... There is little lacking before humanity imposes the regime of hell on earth.

On the other hand, the innocence that remains in our souls makes us realize that it is impossible for human society to stably remain in a state of revolt against the Creator, in which morality and the laws of nature are violated as they are today.

There is a certain point to which Providence allows disorder to go, but once this limit – which we are very close to – is crossed, the Angels, Our Lady, and God Himself will intervene, for Satan cannot establish his throne on the face of the earth, and the order of the universe must be restored according to divine designs.

What proof is there that this will happen?

The proof, for those who have faith, is given to us by Our Lord: “have confidence, I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33). And these words are reinforced by the interior whisperings of the voice of grace, which becomes an extraordinary symphony in the depths of our souls, proclaiming: discipline, ceremonial, sacredness, prayer, wisdom, common sense, and *pulchrum* will return!

Just as God once restored to Job everything he had lost and more (cf. Job 42:10), let us be certain that to this Job – our sad humanity today – vir-

tue, morality, and divine life will be restored.

In what, then, does the certainty of victory consist? In confidence taken to the level of conviction.

Confidence is the virtue of hope strengthened by faith, so that between hope, confidence, and the certainty of victory there is no difference in substance, but only in degree. Hope – like all other virtues – must be practised. But, through our own efforts, we will never take it to its fullest extreme. It is therefore important to ask Our Lady to grant us such a precious privilege in matters of confidence, instilling this conviction within us.

To the extent that we harbour an enthusiastic and joyful conviction in our souls, we will advance in practicing the First Commandment, for only those who possess it truly love God. Now, by fulfilling the first, we will practice all the others, purchase our salvation, and attain holiness.

The certainty of the coming of the Reign of Mary

In my case, I am compelled to acknowledge that, through a gift of Providence and a merciful initiative of Our Lady – which I consider entirely gratuitous and not earned by any prayer

or great personal merit – I was assisted by a very powerful grace in the line of faith.

From the moment I met Dr. Plinio in the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in São Paulo, on July 7, 1956, the flame of certainty of victory was lit within me, like a very clear flash of lightning, and the certainty that he was a providential man who would bring order to the world, defeat evil, and establish on the face of the earth a regime by which good would be enthroned.

As time passed and I benefited from my association with him, this initial grace became clearer and more lucid, and the idea of him being a great victor of God became even more deeply engraved in my mind.

This unshakable certainty, which Dr. Plinio held as a participant in the fortress that is God Himself, penetrated and accompanied me throughout my life, never abandoning me. I can confess that I have faced trials in fulfilling my personal mission, especially during the long periods when I was afflicted with deadly illnesses, from which I logically deduced that I would die. But I do not recall ever doubting the victory of the cause he championed.

It is therefore necessary to have this perspective rooted and anchored deep within our souls, so that the flames of our confidence may rise to the gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem, repeating the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven!"

Our goal is to see the birth of a historical era far holier and more filled with supernatural vitality than the past. A kingdom built with such beauty, splendour, and brilliance that it can be said of it: "Heaven has been transposed to earth." This will be the supreme triumph of the Wise and Immaculate Heart of Mary!

These were the words spoken by Dr. Plinio at the close of his last public lecture, on August 19, 1995: "Of one thing I am certain, and I am certain that all of you are certain of this also. In 'x' number of years, be it five, fifty, or a hundred, someone will say: 'I do not know what happened, but of one thing I am certain: Our Lady triumphed!'"¹ ❖

Excerpts from oral expositions given between 1996 and 2007

¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 19/8/1995.

We await the birth of a historical era far holier and more filled with supernatural vitality than the past, which will be the supreme triumph of the Wise and Immaculate Heart of Mary!

Evening at Sedes Sapientiae House, Mairiporã (Brazil)

As Members of One Body

The sacrifices big and small, adorned with charity, the fervent desires accompanying the prayers of simple hearts, and the good works of virtuous men constitute an inestimable wealth in the Church's treasury for the benefit of all the faithful.



✠ Adriel Brandelero

When the icy days of winter give way to the first rains of spring, enveloping inert nature in a milder climate, humanity is presented with the emergence of a new life, rich in principles, mysteries, and symbolism.

"I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5).

Who could fail to hear the echoes of these divine words when contemplating the delicate branches that sprout from the long-lived vines of a legendary ter-

roir, and extract from this simple teaching fruits of sweetness and peace, an effective remedy for salvation?

Did not Our Lord want to reveal in this allegory a supernatural reality that He was pleased to shape in the natural order when the world was created? Yes! Beyond being a simple image of the Saviour, the vine delivers to humanity the wine that time and barrels will enhance, in anticipation of the moment when it will give way to the Blood of Christ during Mass.

The Eucharist is the most tangible expression of an invisible reality that reveals the intimate relationship between the vine and the branches, between Christ and His members: the Communion of Saints.

When reciting the Creed, we proclaim our faith in this truth, expressly professed by the Church since the fifth century,¹ without, however, meditating on the supernatural universe it encompasses. Let us return briefly to the crystal-clear sources of Scripture and the ancient teachings of the Church to better understand this point of Catholic doctrine and the inexhaustible love that, through it, is poured out upon us.

The Communion of Saints, in holy things

The expression *Communion of Saints* is best understood when considered in two distinct senses: communion in holy things, *sancta*; and communion among holy people, *sancti*.

In most Eastern liturgies, while presenting the offerings, the celebrant recites: "*Sancta sanctis!* – "God's holy gifts for God's holy people." "The faithful (*sancti*) are fed by Christ's Holy Body and Blood (*sancta*) to grow in the communion of the Holy Spirit (*koinonia*) and to communicate it to the world."²



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"I am the vine, you are the branches": The Communion of Saints is closely tied to the relationship between Christ and His members

The first meaning of the word *communion* that comes to mind is undoubtedly that which refers to the Eucharist. However, the term *koinonia* has, since ancient times, signified the intimate union of bishops with the faithful, of bishops among themselves, and likewise of the faithful among themselves. To expressing the union of people with this word was to recognize a single vital unity that bound them,³ like the divine sap that gives vigour to all branches.

The letters of the Apostle St. Paul undoubtedly play an enlightening role in explaining this dogma, for, based on his masterfully taught doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-14), he brought a certain degree of clarity to a theme that nevertheless remains a mystery.

“For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body” (Eph 5:29-30). Under the same Head, who is Our Lord, we all form one Body, one Church, whether triumphant, suffering, or militant.

Now, “the condition of the saints differs from ours, it is true, but just as the condition of one member of the same body differs from that of another member.”⁴

Therefore, since we constitute the one and the same supernatural organism, “the good of some is communicated to others. And so, among other things that the Apostles taught us, we must believe that there is a communion of goods in the Church,”⁵ through which Christ gives us life.

Heaven and earth under the same “roof”

Communion with the blessed in eternity arises from a natural manifestation of the Catholic heart. The honour we devote to them has been propagated in the Church since its inception, for we are sure that “they know our needs better than we do, and before our prayer reaches them, God has prepared them to hear and answer it.”⁶



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It can be said that “the Communion of Saints is the Church,” to such an extent that both realities are identical.

“The way of salvation”, by Andrea de Bonaiuto - Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence (Italy)

Because they are more united to the Divine Word, the saints “establish the whole Church more firmly in holiness, lend nobility to the worship which the Church offers to God here on earth and in many ways contribute to its greater edification.”⁷ This rule applies, *a fortiori*, to the Virgin Mary, who is both the Mother of Christ and a most eminent member of His Mystical Body. “She is the living memory of Jesus and, as such, she is the centre of attention that harmonizes differences and ensures the unity of the disciples’ prayer.”⁸

Also, prayer for the souls of the departed who are still being purified in the blessed flames of Purgatory, comes from an ancient tradition, as the Second Book of Maccabees attests: “it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin” (12:46).

Now that it is clear with whom we share such wonders, it remains to be seen of what these common goods actually consist.

Infinite treasure within reach of all

It can be said that “the Communion of Saints is the Church,”⁹ to such an extent that both realities are identical. Thus, the very faith received from the Apostles, “a treasure of life which is enriched by being shared,”¹⁰ holds within itself the richness made available to every baptized person.

In the communication of this faith, we find invaluable and countless gifts at our disposal. Among these, the Sacraments are paramount, tangible signs of grace that allow us to participate intimately in divine life, and especially Baptism, the gateway through which we enter the Church. Although it is more appropriate to the Eucharist, since it is in it that our union with the Redeemer is consummated, the term *communion* can be applied to each of the other Sacraments, since they all lead us to Christ.

Concomitant with the flow of sacramental graces, “the Holy Spirit ‘distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank’ for the build-



ing up of the Church.”¹¹ The new spiritualities that have emerged over the centuries, not without the healthy influence of local customs and traditions, “share in the living tradition of prayer and are essential guides for the faithful. In their rich diversity they are refractions of the one pure light of the Holy Spirit.”¹²

It is in this diversity that the Church manifests herself to be even more beautifully and enriched, for “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7).

Communion in charity

Our actions, moreover, even those considered insignificant, when performed in charity, benefit the baptized. “For all of us, who are sons of God and constitute one family in Christ, as long as we remain in communion with one another in mutual charity and in one praise of the most holy Trinity, are corresponding with the intimate vocation of the Church,”¹³ for “none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself” (Rom 14:7).

Indeed, holy actions, small sacrifices well accepted, and duties of state carried out seriously constitute in the Church’s treasury a vast, varied, and incalculable treasure for the benefit of souls. It is with wisdom that this Mother carefully guards in her sacred vault the legacy of the saints, their virtues and works, remembering them “at the appropriate time, as salutary examples, as eloquent protests against the dire tendencies of certain situations and times.”¹⁴

Thus, by the exemplary life of the righteous “we are shown a most safe path by which among the vicissitudes of this world, in keeping with the state in life and condition proper to each of us, we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is, perfect holiness.”¹⁵

By practising good works, we further accumulate merits in Heaven which – in addition to atoning for our debts to God’s justice – can be com-

municated by Divine Providence to our neighbours for the benefit of their souls, even though this escapes our knowledge. It is in this way that we become “fruitful with the fruitfulness of Mary and of the Church.”¹⁶

This is perhaps the most inscrutable aspect of the Communion of Saints, as Pope Pius XII declared: “This is a deep mystery, and an inexhaustible subject of meditation, that the salvation of many depends on the prayers and voluntary penances which the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ offer for this intention and on the cooperation of pastors of souls and of the faithful, especially of fathers and mothers of families, a cooperation which they must offer to our Divine Saviour.”¹⁷

However, while it is true that a virtuous soul elevates the entire Mystical Body, it is equally true that the sinner harms this entire magnificent edifice, so much so that “one can speak of a communion of sin, whereby a soul that lowers itself through sin drags down

with itself the church and, in some way, the whole world.”¹⁸

After all, every infected member compromises the proper functioning of the organism. Now, if remedies are applied to infections of the body, there is no lack of them for those of the soul: “Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects” (Jas 5:16). Here is another great way to benefit the Mystical Body of Christ: by apply the healing balm of prayer.

God is pleased with mediations

Since the Church Militant relies on the Saviour’s promise that we will be heard when we ask the Father in His name (cf. Jn 14:13-14), the infallible power of prayer profoundly influences the relationship between the members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Fr. Monsabré recounts that a priest, after converting a large number of people, supposedly by virtue of his gifts of oratory, withdrew to pray, and



Francisco Lécarios

One virtuous soul elevates the entire Mystical Body, and the exemplary life of the righteous teaches us a safe path leading to perfect union with Christ

Scene from the life of a hermit, by Paul Bril

then “God showed him the poor little lay brother who accompanied him on his missions and who, during his sermons, piously recited the Rosary and the litanies of the saints. It was he who moved Heaven to obtain the conversion of sinners; it was the Communion of Saints that, through this unknown and perhaps despised man, obtained the circulation of the extraordinary graces attributed to the apostolic zeal and eloquence of the preacher.”¹⁹

Another illuminating example of intercession is the case of Henri Pranzini, a terrible murderer from the late 19th century, whose good fortune it was to enjoy the compassion of St. Therese of the Child Jesus when she was still a young girl. He was condemned to die by guillotine for his crimes, but he irrevocably refused to bow before the Holy Tribunal of Confession.

Therese, already well aware of the infinite mercy of the Heart of Jesus, insistently commended this poor soul to the Divine Redeemer: “Feeling that of myself I could do nothing, I offered to God all the infinite merits of Our Lord, the treasures of the Church, and finally I begged Céline to have a Mass offered for my intentions. I didn’t dare ask this myself for fear of being obliged to say it was for Pranzini, the great criminal.”²⁰

Since faith assured her that her prayers would be answered, Therese



Photos: Reproduction

Suppliant prayer is capable of winning divine intervention, for the good of one soul or of the entire Church

At the left, a photograph of the murderer Henri Pranzini taken in March of 1887; at the right, St. Therese in 1886

asked only for a sign to prove the condemned man’s repentance. This was granted to her when she opened the newspaper to check the fate of that poor soul and read, her eyes flowing with tears, that Pranzini, before being executed, had piously kissed the crucifix the chaplain presented to him.

The suppliant’s prayer, not necessarily adorned with beautiful words, but rather with ardent desire and complete confidence that it will be heard, is capable of winning

divine intervention, whether for the good of one soul or that of the entire Church. Because, by the law of the Communion of Saints, our supernatural life is explained in relation to Christ and is built for the benefit of His Mystical Spouse.

According to the apt expression of St. James, it is in God that we live, move, and have our being (cf. Acts 17:28); and in Him we benefit the entire Mystical Body of Christ and are benefited by it. ✠

¹ Cf. VILAPLANA MOLINA, Antonio. *La Comunión de los Santos*. Madrid: BAC, 1985, p.12.

² CCC 948.

³ Cf. HERTLING, L. *Communio. Chiesa e papato nella antichità cristiana*, apud FERNÁNDEZ, Aurelio. *Teología Dogmática. Curso fundamental de la Fe Católica*. Madrid: BAC, 2009, p.672.

⁴ MONSABRÉ, OP, Jacques-Marie-Louis. *La Communion des Saints*. In: *Exposition du Dogme Catholique. Gouvernement de Jésus-Christ*. 10.ed. Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1882, p.307.

⁵ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. In *Symbolum Apostolorum*, a.10.

⁶ MONSABRÉ, op. cit., p.310.

⁷ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Lumen gentium*, n.49.

⁸ LEO XIV. *Homily*, 9/6/2025.

⁹ CCC 946.

¹⁰ CCC 949.

¹¹ CCC 951.

¹² CCC 2684.

¹³ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, op. cit., n.51.

¹⁴ MONSABRÉ, op. cit., p.321.

¹⁵ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, op. cit., n.50.

¹⁶ LEO XIV, op. cit.

¹⁷ PIUS XII. *Mystici Corporis Christi*, n.44.

¹⁸ ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Reconciliatio et penitentia*, n.16.

¹⁹ MONSABRÉ, op. cit., p.327.

²⁰ ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX. Manuscrit A. *La grâce de Noël*. In: *Œuvres Complètes*. Paris: Cerf; Desclée De Brouwer, 2006, p.143.

The Orphanhood of a Daughterless Mother...

God had united them in tender and supernatural affection. Love for of the world, however, opened an insurmountable gulf between them, with grave consequences.



✠ **Sr. Diana Milena Devia**

To many of our contemporaries, and even to some Catholics, the saints seem like towering mountains of virtue, superhuman beings, predestined, separated from all and from everything, inimitable in the awesome grandeur of their deeds... Yet, from the heights of Heaven, where they enjoy eternal bliss, how they must smile at such an untrue conception!

Men like all of us, subject to the same needs, vicissitudes, and miseries of earthly life, how they needed to struggle and to be supported to faithfully follow the path grace showed them! This is a reality we will have the opportunity to experience on Judgment Day. Until then, it is worth refuting some false impressions with which the devil, the world, or the indolence of our flesh seek to cloud the memory of these exemplary men and women.

One of the great lies associated with the memory of the saints is that they are *isolated* souls. Yes, self-sufficient people, who prayed for others without needing others to pray for them, who single-handedly converted multitudes, and who practised virtue sustained by a peculiar divine predestination...

So, for those who mistakenly believe in such assumptions, we dedicate

the following story. It begins in late 1147, in Germany.

Founding of the Bingen Monastery

Hildegard, a mystic and abbess, had just founded the Rupertsberg Monastery on the banks of the Rhine, in a place that would immortalize her name: Bingen. Her prophetic writings were approved by the Pope at the Synod of Trier in 1148, and from then on, all those seeking light and solace amid life's tribulations flocked to her. Thus, Rupertsberg soon became a veritable centre of pilgrimage for Christianity.

The collaborators of a great Saint

In the shadow of the prophetess of Bingen grew chosen souls, certainly raised up by God to make straight her paths, assist her in her apostolic tasks, and surely to sustain her in virtue. After all, Hildegard was as human as any of us, a woman weak and fearful enough to be wary of everything along the paths of mysticism, even refusing for decades to reveal what she glimpsed in the "Living Light".

Today we know that this reserved attitude toward her own visions was not solely due to her humility. Hildegard

had been poorly educated in the rudiments of writing and barely mastered the Teutonic language, much less Latin. Thus, she needed the support of a fearless, pious, and learned confessor to be freed from the fears the unknown caused her, as well as the company of a noble nun who served as her confidant, secretary, and scribe. Both, supervised by her, worked diligently on producing her first book, *Scivias*, whether transcribing or correcting the grammar of her writings, or translating and interpreting her visions, as she herself mentions in the work's prologue.¹

Now, who was this elect young woman?

She was Richardis von Stade, a descendant of the powerful family of the Margraves of Stade. A niece of Jutta von Spanheim, Hildegard's former teacher, she entered the monastery shortly before the move to Rupertsberg, her mother being one of the greatest supporters of the endeavour.

A tender affection soon blossomed between disciple and teacher, and "the Saint gave Richardis the highest demonstration of her trust, sharing with her, without reservation, the sublime secrets of her heart, making her a companion

and helper in her work.”² The young follower, therefore, became something more than a daughter: a true friend, a companion in tribulations.

However, this love had to be purified from the stains of human selfishness; and the trials sent by God to Richardis, for this purpose, were the prelude to a painful melody that the future had in store for Hildegard.

An unexpected appointment

In 1151, an “election” of dubious legitimacy ended such an elevated relationship. Hildegard received word that Richardis had been chosen as abbess of a convent where she had never lived. The ecclesiastical authorities then ordered her, as was customary, to authorize the nun’s departure for her new destination: the monastery of Bassum, in Saxony.

Who orchestrated this election? And whom would it benefit? The community that had chosen a stranger? The young and inexperienced one chosen, completely ignorant of the art of dealing with souls? The interests of a powerful and wealthy family, which had no need of such honours? This was a strange case, in which nobles, archbishops, and even the Pope intervened against the desires of Hildegard, whom they had once so fervently supported...

Without understanding the reasons behind such a choice, and aided by the grace of discernment, the Saint found herself obliged to defend the vocation of her spiritual daughter. She clearly knew God’s will regarding Richardis and knew, furthermore, that she had an indispensable role in the fulfillment

of her own mission. She, therefore, refused to obey that order.

Hildegard strikes back

Since that the driving force behind such an appointment might well have been the ambition of Richardis’ mother, she wrote to her in a severe and incisive tone: “The abbatial dignity you desire for them³ is certainly, certainly, certainly not the will of God, nor compatible with the salvation of their souls. Therefore, if you are truly the mother of these daughters

dearest daughter Richardis from my counsel and my will, as well as from those of my other sisters and friends, separating her from our cloister [...]. I beg you, by Him who gave His life for you, and by His most noble Mother, to send me my dearest daughter.”⁵

Hildegard also wrote to the Archbishop of Mainz, who had brusquely ordered her to permit Richardis’ transferal: “The reasons alleged in favour of this young woman’s rights are invalid before God. [...] The Spirit of God affirms in His zeal: ‘Oh, pas-

tors, lament and weep at this time, for you do not know what you do when you distribute, according to opportunities for profit, the offices established by God.’”⁶ Later, she wrote announcing to the prelate his approaching death: “The heaven of the Lord’s vengeance has opened [...]. Arise, for your days are short.”⁷ Deposed from the Archbishopric in 1153 – for misuse of funds, among other reasons – he died a few months after reading the prophetic missive.

Making a final effort, Hildegard appealed to the Roman Pontiff, but all was in vain: men had decided that Richardis should go her own way, even though God Himself had united them.

Yet the final blow was yet to come. The decisive step toward separation would come from the one the holy abbess least expected: Richardis herself...

To be a sun or a mere reflection of it?

Faced with such a complex situation, Richardis faced the great crossroads of her life: to accept the position



The Saint gave the young lady the highest demonstration of trust, sharing with her the sublime secrets of her heart and making her a companion and helper in her work

St. Hildegard receives a supernatural communication in the presence of her confessor and Richardis - State Library of Lucca (Italy)

of yours, take care to not become the ruin of their souls, to then, against your wishes, lament with bitter moaning and tears. May God enlighten and strengthen your mind and soul in the short time of life left to you.”⁸

She also appealed to the Archbishop of Bremen, Richardis’ brother, in moving terms: “Listen to me, prostrate at your feet with tears and anguish [...]: a certain terrible man has removed our

of abbess out of self-love, or to renounce it for love of God and of her spiritual mother, Hildegard.

Under pressure from everyone, and perhaps even more vehemently from the first stirrings of ambition, she ultimately accepted the position. It seems that it was no longer enough for her to shine in the firmament of the Church as a star illuminated by Hildegard's glory... Richardis wanted to shine on her own, to be a sun and not just a beautiful reflection of it.

Thus, after a farewell that we can imagine must have been dramatic, she abandoned her superior and set off for the monastery of Bassum.

Far from Hildegard, death

Grief then seized Hildegard with unusual vehemence, for her esteem for Richardis was based on a divine revelation. Indeed, she had learned of her pupil's mission in a vision, and God had united them in such a way that her departure was as if her very heart had been ripped out: "Woe is me, mother, woe is me, daughter! Why have you abandoned me like an orphan? I loved the nobility of your ways, your wisdom and your chastity, your soul and your whole life [...]. May all who share a sorrow similar to mine beat their breast with me, those who, in their love for God, have cultivated in their hearts and minds such love – as



The separation became definitive, and the indispensable place of Richardis was never completely filled

St. Hildegard - Abbey of Eibingen (Germany)

I have for you – for someone who was snatched from them in an instant, as you were from me.”⁸

Months passed, and the separation became final... eternal. Regretting her mistake and, no doubt, measuring the Consequences of her act – which would be an obstacle to the entire fulfillment of her Foundress' mission – Richardis tearfully wished to return to her; death, however, prevented this from happening. The abbess of Bassum died on October 29, 1152. Not even a year had passed since her departure from Rupertsberg.

A work that will never be completed...

The complexity of the revelations with which Providence illuminated Hildegard's spirit required a kindred soul capable of “translating” such supernatural communications into living teachings for the centuries to come. Anyone who has come into contact with the works left by this eloquent Doctor of the Church will have felt the lack of such a complement: visions difficult to understand or inextricable in meaning for those unfamiliar with a relationship with Heaven; a language which is captivating, yet often obscure, far removed from reality... How different these writings would be if there had been a pen to transcribe them, a capable heart to explain their mysteries!

From this lamentable episode onward, Hildegard's life was never the same. The cross she carried, already so heavy due to its prophetic nature, became even more onerous. She needed something as human as a friendship that, purified of all selfishness, would help her fulfil her calling entirely. Thus, Richardis' essential place was never fully occupied...⁹

May her life at least serve as an example to us: on the path to holiness, no one is exempt from fulfilling a mission alongside their baptized brethren, and perhaps the cross we refuse to carry today will become an even greater burden for other souls in the future... ✝

¹ Cf. ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN. *Scivias*. São Paulo: Paulus, 2015, p.98.

² HERWEGEN, Hildephonse. Les collaborateurs de Sainte Hildegarde. In: *Révue Bénédictine*. Abbaye de Maredsous. Year XXI. No.1 (1904), p.305.

³ St. Hildegard refers to Richardis and her niece Adelheid, also appointed abbess of a monastery.

⁴ ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN. To the Margravine Richardis. In: *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, v.III, p.120.

⁵ ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN. Carta a Hartwig, Arzobispo de Bremen, entre 1151 y 1152. In: *Cartas de Hildegarda de Bingen. Epistolario completo*. Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2015, v.I, p.71-72.

⁶ ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN. Carta a Enrique, Arzobispo de Maguncia, año 1151. In: *Cartas de Hildegarda de Bingen*, op. cit., p.100.

⁷ ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN. Carta a Enrique, Arzobispo de Maguncia, año 1153. In: *Cartas de Hildegarda de Bingen*, op. cit., p.102..

⁸ ST. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN. Carta a la Abadesa Ricarda

de Bassum, entre 1151 y 1152. In: *Cartas de Hildegarda de Bingen*, op. cit., p.195-196.

⁹ Hildegard enjoyed the spiritual friendship of several nuns and monks, who helped her with the same tasks until the end of her days; however, in none of them did the Saint glimpse the divine predilection that hovered over Richardis.



Do the Saints in Heaven Truly Intercede for Us?

In the selfish and self-serving world we live in, it is difficult to find a true friend who remains permanently willing to help us, without expecting anything in return. We might even be led to believe that this kind of person no longer exists...

But yes, they do! And there are millions of them! The saints in Heaven, who share in God's own charity and are totally united with Him, feel for us a kindness that even the best hypothetical friend would not show us.

It is impossible to imagine the blessed immersed in the torrent of God's delights (cf. Ps 35:9) and yet oblivious to the arduous lives of poor mortals. In reality, the fire of divine love impels them to care for us, as St. Thomas says: "the greater the charity of the saints in Heaven, the more they pray for wayfarers" (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.83, a.11).

As a basis for the truth of this heavenly intercession, the Angelic Doctor adduces the authority of St. Jerome: "If the Apostles and martyrs, while still in the body, could pray for others, when they still had to worry about themselves, how much more will they be able to do so after they are crowned, victorious and triumphant!" (*Contra Vigilantium*, n. 6: PL 23, 344).

Furthermore, the prayers of the blessed "are efficacious in impetrating through their previous merits and through God's acceptance" (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.83, a.11, ad 1) because they, having overcome life's battles "while living, merited to pray for us" (ad 5). Such is the spiritual union among all members of the Church!

But – someone might object – why turn to the saints, if the merits of Jesus Christ can already obtain everything for us? Aquinas answers luminously: "It is God's will that inferior beings should be helped by all those

that are above them, wherefore we ought to pray not only to the higher but also to the lower saints" (ad 4). Furthermore, "God wishes to make known his sanctity" (ad 4), since, as the Liturgy states in one of the prefaces to the saints, by crowning the merits of the righteous, the Lord exalts His own gifts.

Indeed, although it is absolutely sufficient to resort to divine mercy alone in our prayers, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in His infinite goodness, delights in making His friends (cf. Jn 15:15) sharers in His mediating power. He is not like a boss who prefers to perform alone the actions he could delegate to others; on the contrary, He acts like a kind superior who likes to involve his subordinates in the command.

When we need to expedite a complicated process, it is common for us to ask those closest to us about the most effective way to obtain what we need, and we always seek an "entry" or a "sponsor" for this purpose. "He who has godparents will not die a pagan," the popular saying goes.

Well, let us not forget that we have thousands of "godparents" in Heaven, who know and love us. To help us, they only wait for us to turn to their intercession! ❖



We have true friends, always willing to help us, without expecting any retribution. And there are millions of them!

Detail of the Fiesole Altarpiece, by Fra Angelico - National Gallery, London



The Fellowship of the Elect in Empyrean Heaven

How attracted we are to the idea of a perfect relationship, full of admiration, kindness and harmony, without any friction or disappointment! That which may be just a dream in this valley of tears is one of the rewards prepared by God for those who are saved.

✠ **Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira**

The body is an essential element of our person. The soul is not, for example, as clothing is to the body, which can be exchanged for others without altering it. The body is not the clothing of the soul; body and soul form a single whole, a single person.

And if someone – God forbid! – goes to hell, justice demands that they be punished in body and soul, because it is the whole person who sins and, therefore, must be punished. The body is the soul’s instrument for most sins, and it seems reasonable that the instrument be punished as the soul, the author of sin, is punished. Therefore, *contrario sensu*, it is also fitting that the body be rewarded when a person is saved.

God prepared Empyrean Heaven so that bodies may have their reward there. The soul will reunite with the body at the resurrection of the dead, and the latter will enjoy numerous delights. But at the same time, the soul will have an even greater delight, and so it should be because, of the two elements that constitute man, the soul is, beyond comparison, the nobler.

We need only consider animals – which have bodies but no souls – and man’s superiority over them to understand the extent to which the soul,

spiritual and immortal, is superior to the body.

From this perspective, it is clear that the happiness of the soul must be far greater than that of the body; and not just far greater, but infinitely greater. Indeed, the soul sees God face to face, and in this communion with Him, it experiences inexpressible joy.

Intense and direct contact among souls

To form an adequate idea of the happiness of seeing God, I refer to what Cornelius a Lapide¹ writes about the delight of the fellowship of souls in Celestial Paradise, the contentment a soul will have in being acquainted with another and being one with an-

other. From this – as a remote, pale, and insufficient term of comparison – we can get a sense of what the soul’s communion with God is like.

The contact of the souls in Paradise is most intense and direct. It differs from the contact between us, in which each person reflects, in some way, states of soul that we can observe when we pay attention. At times we observe hypothetically, at others with certainty – often we are unable to distinguish precisely between hypothesis and certainty – and we form a certain notion about the mentality, psychology, and the disposition of spirit of another person, how they are perceiving our conversation and our company, and how we are perceiving theirs.

This contact between souls that occurs on earth sheds some light, but above all, it projects shadows. We would like to know much more. In Heaven, however, souls know each other directly, each one “reads” the other, as it were, like an open book.

Complete harmony among all

Since the souls in Heaven are all in a state of perfection, having been purified in Purgatory of all the defects they had on earth, the consideration of any soul is highly pleasing. There are none

*The contact
among the souls in
Paradise is most
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“reads” the other
like an open book*

of the shortcomings that exist in this world, where, whether a good psychologist or not, we are suddenly disturbed, due to our own or someone else's defect, with states of spirit incompatible with our own. And with the incompatibility there arises displeasure in coexistence.

Sometimes, on the contrary, a great harmony emerges with another soul. But it is something fleeting, appearing for a few moments and then disappearing. At most, we can say: "If I knew this person more deeply, in such and such an aspect, there is a probability that we would understand each other very well. And in other aspects, how would we understand each other? Would we get along equally well? This aspect, which manifested itself so fleetingly, what depth, what substance does it have? Who really is this person?"

In Heaven, there is none of that! All states of soul are definitive. Some may appear more prominently, others less so, depending on what the soul sees in God, but everything is perfect.

And we have, then, beyond total knowledge, the knowledge of that which is utterly delightful, harmonious in itself, and harmonious with us – there is no contradiction within those souls.

Since we will be, through prayer and the help of Our Lady, in a state of perfection, we will never aggravate one another. And we will have joy in seeing all the others around us, as a perpetual celebration of knowledge, of recognition and of greater insights. And this joy – which is still not even remotely the joy of seeing God face to face – we can well imagine if we consider that we will meet in Heaven those who were our acquaintances on earth and who helped us, or whom we helped, to do good.

A fellowship in which inequalities are loved

This is true fellowship, in which envy, hatred, and dislike of inequalities do not exist; in which the greater fills the lesser with contentment and satisfaction!

Some time ago, traveling along a highway in São Paulo, I had a very fleeting idea of this reality. There is a huge eucalyptus plantation along a certain stretch, belonging to a paper company, and in a certain spot, there is a small wetland, with a stream; the land is somewhat marshy, and there is a clearing in the plantation. I pass this place quite often, and every now and then I have seen the wind blowing in a curious way, perhaps in a sort of whirlwind,

In Heaven we will have joy in seeing all the others around us, as if in a perpetual celebration of knowledge, of recognition and of greater insight

which makes it seem like those trees are bowing to one another.

Seeing these eucalyptus trees, I think of the harmony that exists in Heaven between people who appreciate each other's virtues and revere one another. Including the greatest in relation to the least, because every human being, no matter how great, must love and respect their fellow human beings, for they are made in the image and likeness of the Creator. But also, because every human being is unique in some way. And in Heaven, that which is unique about a person is known. Therefore, one has the special delight to, upon making an acquaintance, making a correlation to God, understanding what He desired to accomplish in that person.

All of this makes the soul-to-soul conviviality a delight we cannot fully comprehend in this life.

A delightful variety of spiritual flavours

One aspect of earthly relationships can help us understand this delight a



Detail of "All the Saints", by Colombe - "Book of Hours of Louis de Laval", National Library of France (Paris)

Reproduction



Dr. Plinio in August of 1991; at the top of the page and in inset, works of Fra Angelico, respectively: "The Virgin Mary with the Apostles and other saints" - National Gallery, London; St. Dominic - San Marco National Museum, Florence (Italy)



Reproduction

little. There are people who are expressive; that is, they express what they feel. Some are pleasantly expressive. Others are unpleasantly expressive, sometimes through no fault of their own.

It is most delightful to come into contact with a person who expresses themselves well, especially when one perceives not only the clear meaning of their speech, but also the harmony, the consonance of their entire personality with what is being said.

It could be said that someone with this aptitude is – in relation to someone who expresses themselves theoretically, without any external manifestation – like one who sings in comparison to one who simply speaks.

Now, in the contact between people in Paradise – and especially with the Angels, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, and with Our Lord – we will notice this, because everything will unfold perfectly and most pleasantly; there will not,

We will also be able to contemplate each saint in all of his virtues, especially those they most practised on earth

therefore, be a single contact that is not truly magnificent.

In the splendours of Heaven, if we see St. Gregory VII, for example, passing by us radiant with glory – as he was when Emperor Henry IV knelt before the gates of the castle where the Pope was staying, asking for forgiveness – we will notice all the forms of sanctity that existed within him, including the

righteous anger that motivated him at that moment.

We cannot imagine, therefore, a syrupy, Heaven. Sweet, yes; syrupy, no! With a delectable variety of flavours – spiritual flavours, of course! – through which all the virtuous states of the soul, from the most attentive and reflective inquiry to rapture, from the most angelic wrath to the most diaphanous and tranquil serenity, will be felt in various souls, especially those whose virtue was most intense on earth.

There is a painting by Fra Angelico, which I like very much, that depicts St. Dominic studying. To highlight the Saint's purity, the artist painted a grown man, yet with the innocence of a child, seated with one hand on his chin, reading a book he has on his lap. Well, in Heaven, we will be able to contemplate in St. Dominic all the virtues reflected there.

Encounter with St. Thomas Aquinas

How beautiful it would be, for example, to see St. Thomas Aquinas during his lifetime, pondering a topic deeply, with his powerful spirit searching for the truth.

We can imagine how, after raising magnificent mountain ranges of pros and cons, of thinking and saying that



he could not resolve the issue, he would kneel before the tabernacle, bowing low, and with his gaze fixed on the mediation of Our Lady, he would open the tabernacle and put his head inside, to think and find the truth. How magnificent! What would his venerable brow be like?

Seeing St. Thomas pass by in Heaven, we will notice all this! And we will understand the joy that this consideration can bring. Especially if he smiles at us and says: “You were at a meeting in São Paulo, where you all spoke about me placing my head in the tabernacle, were you not? At that moment, I was praying for you from Heaven!”

How wonderful it will be to know that we were known by St. Thomas, who protected us from Heaven, when we were on earth. We can imagine those first encounters in Heaven and the joy of that kind of fellowship!

A dazzling orchestra

I should also say something about interacting with the Angels, which is another way to get closer to understanding what it means to see God face to face.

The Angels know the souls of the blessed perfectly, and the blessed know them, as well as knowing what is happening in other souls. And in this cognition, they contemplate the full perfection of each other.

An Angel, as a spiritual being, is extremely simple and has a dominant note that defines him. So, we could say that there is an Angel of purity, another of courage, another of fortitude, another of wisdom, another of temperance, and so on, and imagine the various virtues in their thousand possible varieties, and Angels reflecting them in a very accentuated manner.

*The fellowship
of souls in Paradise
is more precious
and more valuable
than the material
delights of
Empyrean Heaven*

Thus, considering the Angels as a whole, we would have a panorama of all the virtues. And, considering the Angels as they relate to one another, not schematically, but in relation to the movements of the happenings in Heaven, we would have a total picture of an amazing orchestra, playing an improvised score at every moment.

Thus, the various virtues intertwine, unravel, group, and regroup, but with a fullness and strength of personality and assertion that we, mere earthly creatures, absolutely cannot imagine.

A single Angel would be enough to leave us entirely dazzled. To have an idea of this, suffice it to say that if we conversed with just one Angel for a million years, we would experience the sensation that he still has something new to tell us.

Angels far outnumber human beings; we must fill the vacancies left by the damned angels when they fell into hell. So, we can glimpse what a lasting and admirable conviviality with this countless number of Angels will be like, a veritable sea of delights.

Conviviality among souls in Paradise

Suppose we could travel to distant lands. The most pleasant thing, surely,

would be to visit places with diverse geographical settings and landscapes, where there would be different people with whom we would have an affinity of spirit, who were all good, but above all, demonstrating different forms of beauty and goodness, and that we could all harmonize. This combined variety of people and ambiances would be the greatest pleasure.

But imagine someone said to one of us: “You have to choose between two forms of tourism: visiting various places in the world, empty and devoid of people; or being in a place where, at every moment, people from different parts of the world appear before you, most perfect and filled with goodness, with their regional costumes, their spirit, their language, and each of them with excellent conversation.”

What would we prefer? To be in the empty places or to be with the people? We would choose the people, without a doubt! For, however excellent the panoramas might be, the most important part of man is the soul, and *similis simili gaudet* – one rejoices in his likeness –, the soul rejoices in contact with other souls. It is evident!

The fellowship of souls in Paradise is more precious and more valuable than contact with the matter of Empyrean Heaven, despite its magnificence and all its other wonders; all this pales in comparison to the unparalleled harmony of the relationship we will have in Heaven. ✧

Taken, with adaptations to written language, from: *Conference*.
São Paulo, 9/1/1981

¹ Cf. CORNELIUS A LAPIDE. Ciel. In: *Les trésors de Cornélius a Lapide*. 4.ed. Paris: Poussielgue Frères, 1876, v.I, p.289-291.

A Wise and Warlike Virgin

Renouncing temporal titles in favour of those eternal, St. Catherine confronted the enemies of the Faith, resisted in disputes, suffered imprisonment, preserved her virginity, and remained steadfast in her convictions.



✠ Sr. Juliana Montanari



St. Catherine of Alexandria, by Pietro Nelli - Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht (Netherlands)

I preferred [wisdom] to sceptres and thrones, and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with her. Neither did I liken to her any priceless gem, because all gold is but a little sand in her sight, and silver will be accounted as clay before her. I loved her more than health and beauty” (Wis 7:8-10).

Many women are characterized by a tendency towards vanity, superficiality, greed, and a desire for influence. Not so many seek to excel through knowledge, through the penetration of mysteries, through the acquisition of outstanding sagacity...

I know the story of one, privileged by unparalleled beauty and possessing

great influence thanks to her noble origins and the riches she possessed. She, however, paid no attention to this; her true desire lay in understanding the sciences. And it was easy for her to acquire what she desired: besides being gifted with a rare intellectual capacity, she was born and lived in a city illustrious for its culture, home to immortal philosophers.

The King of kings marries a princess in Egypt

A native of Alexandria, in Egypt, Catherine was the daughter of a pagan king, Costus of Cyprus.¹ Her beauty, majestic bearing, and erudition made her known to all. From childhood, she devoted herself diligently to her studies and was “well instructed in the art of rhetoric, philosophy, geometry, and other sciences.”² But none of this satisfied her. Her penetrating spirit discerned the emptiness of this knowledge and perceived the lack of a “cornerstone” that would give it all meaning.

One day, she had a vision: a Lady carrying a beautiful Child in her arms begged Him to accept Catherine among His servants. The Infant, however, refused. Despite the strong impression it made on her, Catherine was unable to grasp the deeper meaning of the scene.

Instructed since childhood in the sciences of her time, she discerned their emptiness, and the lack of a “cornerstone” that would give them meaning

She continued her studies and later encountered the doctrine of the disciples of Jesus Christ, which completely captivated her heart. Everything enchanted her, and with each new discovery, her thirst for learning grew, always accompanied by celestial satisfaction. “Catherine is a Christian at heart, even before receiving baptism.”³

The vision she had seen then gained meaning, and she understood that all the wealth and knowledge in the world are worthless if one does not enjoy the Divine Child’s favour. After some time, the apparition repeats itself; this time, however, the Infant Jesus is holding a wedding ring and, with great affection, espouses the maiden in the presence of the celestial court.

A great polemicist and invincible lady

At the beginning of the fourth century, after the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian, Maximinus Daia, originally from Dacia, became governor of Syria and Egypt as Cæsar. His cruelty was no less than that of his predecessors: to spill blood and defile maidens was his motto.⁴

Upon assuming power, he issued a decree ordering all inhabitants of Alexandria to offer sacrifices to the gods, under penalty of severe and inexorable punishment. Obsessed with the idea of watching his subjects worship idols and all virgins and noble matrons surrender to his vile intentions, Maximinus resorted to the cruellest torments: some were cast into furnaces, others thrown to wild beasts or drowned in the sea, many were condemned to the dungeon after being violently mutilated with sophisticated instruments of torture.⁵

The atmosphere in the capital was darkened with the smoke of such holocausts, and no one dared to restrain the tyrant’s bestial desires. No one, except Catherine.



St. Catherine argues with the philosophers - Bavarian National Museum, Munich (Germany)

*Much more than on
her own erudition,
she relied rather on
the Saviour’s promise:
“what you are to
say will be given to
you in that hour”*

Driven by the fire of her love, she assisted, encouraged, and strengthened her fellow believers. Deeming such works still insufficient, she soon presented herself at the governor’s palace to defend the vilified Religion.

Upon being informed that an aristocratic virgin wished to speak to him, Maximinus assumed she was yet another maiden who would fall prey to him. Upon seeing her, fascinated

by her beauty and nobility, he asked her:

“Who are you?”

“My origins are well known in Alexandria. My name is Catherine, and my parents are descendants of the most illustrious lineage. I dedicate all my time to learning the truth, and the more I study, the more I am convinced of the impotence of the idols you worship. I am a Christian, and I do everything to be the spouse of Jesus Christ. My only desire is that you, and the entire empire with you, come to know Him. What you profess is nothing more than superstition.”

His pride deeply wounded, and unable to devise a rejoinder, the governor ordered that fifty renowned philosophers be convoked to contend with her.

We can well imagine this being a moment when human weakness made itself felt... But it was also the momentous occasion when the warrior raised a confident plea to the One for whom she combatted.

It is said that an Angel then appeared to her, saying: “Fear not. You will persuade the fifty philosophers and a large number of those who will attend the debate. You will lead them to the knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ and you will win the palm of martyrdom.”⁶

Strengthened by the heavenly messenger, Catherine presented herself before the renowned scholars and the governor, who was there, aroused by curiosity. Seated among them, she refuted all of their subtle and fallacious arguments, one by one.

More than on her own erudition, she relied on the Saviour’s promise: “you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you



"Martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria", by Neri di Bicci - Art Museum of Catalonia, Barcelona (Spain)

who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Mt 10:18-20).

Maximinus was, at first, paralyzed with astonishment. Then he ordered the wise men to present more compelling arguments, but they were overcome by Catherine and finally came to recognize the existence of the one true God, saying: "We will sign this truth with our blood, if necessary."⁷ So they themselves ultimately met their end by being cast into the fire, thus conquering, through martyrdom, the Kingdom of Heaven.

Weakness meets confidence

But the princess' epic was not ended. The Acts of the Martyrs record that she was then cast into a dungeon.⁸

Her resistance, serenity, and ardour were more eloquent than any words spoken by her lips. In this final period of her life, she converted many people to the Church, among them the empress herself, and the leader of a legion with two hundred soldiers, named Porphyry.

Enraged after trying every means to persuade this noblewoman to apostatize from her belief in the true God, and to test her unyielding conviction, Maximinus condemned her to torture on an ap-

*Enraged at his failure
to persuade the
noblewoman to deny
her belief in the true
God, Maximinus found
himself defeated once
again by a miracle*

paratus consisting of four wheels with iron teeth, designed to tear the victim to pieces.

We can conjecture that the Lord once again allowed His servant to fear, upon hearing the sentence. It is plausible to imagine Catherine on her knees, begging for strength in that situation. Undoubtedly, her greatest fear was that, witnessing this torture, many Christians would become terrified and waver.

The moment has arrived. Tied to the cruel instrument, her gaze probably fixed on Heaven, the executioner approaches her to begin the execution. But then – oh, miracle! – an Angel appears and demolishes the machine, the

shattering fragments mortally wounding the executioners themselves.

Maximinus' bestial instinct can no longer tolerate the existence of the virgin who had so humiliated him. In a fit of rage and fury, he orders for her to be beheaded without delay.

The heroine walks serenely to the place indicated for her death. Moments later, she was executed, and her soul flew to meet her Spouse, who awaited her with open arms.

A chaste body protected by Angels

The chronicles relate that instead of blood, milk flowed forth from her severed neck, which many interpret as a sign of her fertile virginity, that is, the spiritual motherhood that St. Catherine carries out in relation to a great number of souls.

Tradition narrates to this day that it was the Angels who came and carried her body away, transporting it to Mount Sinai, and burying it there. Indeed, that chaste body was not to be touched by hands stained by sin. Only the heavenly spirits, with whom St. Catherine was in complete harmony by virtue of her purity, would bear it.

Although these two episodes are not historically proven facts, our devotion can accept them wholeheartedly. It is certain that, if God did not perform these particular wonders to authenticate the fidelity of His servant, He must have performed greater ones, since He always surpasses all human imagination.

In the 11th century, her remains were transferred to Rouen, France, and to this day, her relics exude a sweet fragrance.

Why would the Princess of Alexandria have “gone” to that nation, the first-born daughter of the Church? Perhaps because, upon arriving in eternity, her mission had only just begun...

St. Catherine's heavenly mission

Renouncing temporal titles in favour of those eternal, St. Catherine confronted the enemies of the Faith, resisted in disputes, suffered imprisonment, preserved her virginity, and remained steadfast in her convictions. Our Lord wished to grant her rewards for the victory she won, and one of them was to appoint her as the helper of virginal and heroic souls who would have to face similar situations.

It is worth recalling, at least in passing, the role she played in the life of St. Joan of Arc. Accompanying St. Michael the Archangel and St. Margaret, the martyr of Alexandria appeared and instructed the Maid of Domrémy regarding the fulfilment of her lofty mission to save France. It was St. Catherine who showed the French heroine the hidden sword she was to use in battle. It was also she who revealed to her how she would be wounded and would be captured by the English; and on several occasions, St. Catherine encouraged her in her tribulations, especially in the epi-

sode when Joan threw herself from the tower where she was imprisoned.

St. Joan of Arc kept a ring as a memento of her father. Her glorious protector kissed it, and from then on, the *Pucelle* preserved it as a precious relic. This same ring is venerated in France to this day.

What has she yet to do?

Eternity, as the word indicates, is eternal: Thus, although St. Catherine of Alexandria has been in Heaven for centuries, her story and mission have only just begun...

If the deeds she has already accomplished on behalf of her devotees and the great liberator of France are so extraordinary, what does God still have in store for her from now on?

Her graces have not run dry; her power of intercession has not waned!

Let us not hesitate to invoke her in times of difficulty, especially if we are defending goodness and truth, virtue and the name of God and His Church. There is no doubt that St. Catherine of Alexandria will come to our aid with the brilliance and power that have always characterized her. ✚

The Angels came to carry her body away, and buried it at Mount Sinai. In this manner, that chaste body was not to be touched by hands stained by sin



“The decapitation of St. Catherine of Alexandria”, by Lorenzo Monaco - Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

¹ Cf. PEREIRA, Ney Brasil. *Santa Catarina de Alexandria*. 2.ed. Florianópolis: [s.n.], 2015, p.20.

² SYMEON METAPHRASTES. *Martyrium Sanctae Catharinae*, n.5: PG 116, 279-282.

³ GONZÁLEZ VILLANUEVA, Joaquín. Santa Catalina de Alejandría. In: ECHEVERRÍA, Lamberto de; LLORCA, SJ, Bernardino; REPETTO BETES, José Luis (Org.). *Año*

Cristiano. Madrid: BAC, 2006, v.XI, p.606.

⁴ Cf. Idem, p.608.

⁵ Cf. Idem, p.608-609.

⁶ ROHRBACHER. *Vida dos Santos*. São Paulo: Américas, 1961, v.XX, p.241.

⁷ Idem, p.242.

⁸ Cf. GONZÁLEZ VILLANUEVA, op. cit., p.610.



Unforgettable Afternoons with Dona Lucilia

A physical setback suffered by Dr. Plinio in 1967 was the occasion for Dona Lucilia to become better known to Msgr. João, in an admirable friendship that perfumed the last days of her life.



João S. Clá Dias

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

The countless moral facets of the perfect mother were in Dona Lucilia put within reach of general observation, inviting others to become part of the “thousand children” for whom her overflowing benevolent heart yearned.

Anyone who had the pleasure of visiting that apartment and spending time in the company of Dona Lucilia during the final months of her earthly existence was in a good position to evaluate the high degree of consideration, gentleness and esteem inherent to her noble manners, even in their simplest expressions.

Endowed with a respectful and affectionate character, she was a master in the difficult art of treating others with affable dignity, in a way which always made them feel at home.

With the noteworthy gift of *caus-erie*¹ that she had inherited and enhanced, together with her gentle *savoir-faire*,² she was most agreeable to listen to.

But even beyond all of these excellent qualities was a higher virtue: her readiness to listen, with tireless patience, to everything that others wished to tell her, always seeking the good sides of the facts narrated and, most especially, of her interlocutors.

One rarely finds, especially today, people willing to treat their visitors in this way.

Her own happiness depended on that of her neighbour

Because of her supernatural sense of compassion, it caused her acute suffering to see someone – even a stranger – saddened or slighted. The skill with which she immediately sought to apply the balm of the right word, the fitting expression, a good counsel in a difficult situation, solace in sorrow, and alms for those in need, was admirable.

Dona Lucilia’s own happiness depended on that of her neighbour...

Her soul was moved by the desire to make each person happy, which explains her deep regret when she could not do so. It was the affection of a totally and essentially Catholic heart. Her soul’s joy consisted in loving others for the love of God, and being loved by them.

However, when her goodwill was not reciprocated, she never succumbed to sentiments of bitterness, for she did not pursue personal benefit or advantage in these relationships.

Several people who were with Dona Lucilia during those afternoons of the five last months of her life witnessed

these beautiful characteristics of her conduct. They were the objects of an affability invariably accompanied by benevolent and generous friendliness.

New habits disrupt the old routine of the home

After having accustomed herself to daily and prolonged isolation with nothing to disrupt her routine, Dona Lucilia was suddenly surrounded by unfamiliar sounds, voices and footsteps in her home.

Her telephone, almost silent before, began to ring repeatedly throughout the day. The doorbell rang more frequently...

The circumstances surrounding Dr. Plinio’s lengthy convalescence made it necessary for an attendant to remain on duty who would tactfully deal with any problems that might arise. It was a veritable public relations system, which Dona Lucilia, at her advanced age, could not possibly have imagined.

For this reason, she felt personally responsible for keeping a finger on what was happening.

A memorable invitation, followed by others

At the beginning of Dr. Plinio’s convalescence, the author of these lines,

then a youth, felt the joy of being chosen as the attendant in his apartment.

One day, just as he put down the telephone receiver, he heard, from the dining room, the tinkling of a little bell followed by the strains of a short dialogue between Dona Lucilia and the housemaid:

“Yes, ma’am, you called me?”

“Who was it that telephoned?”

“I don’t know, Dona Lucilia. A man answered it.”

“Who is this man?”

“I’m not sure. It seems that he came to visit Dr. Plinio.”

“Go prepare some tea for this man and for me, because I will invite him to join me until Dr. Plinio wakes up.”

When the maid had withdrawn, Dona Lucilia continued her prayers. It was understandable that, as the lady of the house and gifted with a deep sense of responsibility, she felt obliged to entertain those who visited her son.

The bell rang a second time and when the maid came to the door, Dona Lucilia said:

“Would you kindly tell that man to please enter?”

As soon as he entered, Dona Lucilia greeted him cordially, and started the conversation as follows:

“You must be waiting for Plinio, aren’t you? I would like to tell you something: he has some friends who esteem him very much, and sometimes they invite him to go with them for a few days to a ranch, close to Amparo. And do you know what happened? While he was there, Plinio was walking where the ground was very irregular and stony and he twisted his ankle. He was immediately attended by his friends, but the doctors who later examined him recommended much rest...”³

After this explanation, Dona Lucilia, with her art of placing the visitor entirely at ease, continued:

“Because of this, Plinio will still be a while – you will have to wait longer than you imagined... But, while you wait for him, may I have the pleasure

of your company? Would you like some tea?”

“Please don’t go to the trouble!”

“Perhaps you don’t like tea and would prefer coffee with milk, or something else...”

It was impossible for the young man to refuse. Dona Lucilia then rang the little bell and ordered the maid to bring tea and cookies.

This scene – evocative of the *douceur de vivre*⁴ of old – would from then on be repeated every day. Each time, Dona Lucilia would exercise her invariable and genteel hospitality.

Cherished months

She led conversations with simple and charming decorum. With all of her 91 years, she did not seek to speak of herself, or her past or present difficulties.

In fact, at a certain point she would observe a thoughtful pause that was both noble and distinguished. It was her way of allowing the other person to introduce a topic, for she was always willing to speak about whatever the other preferred.

It was an excellent occasion to observe her harmonious way of approaching topics that sought, first

and foremost, to satisfy the legitimate wishes of her visitor.

In those happy and unforgettable conversations with Dona Lucilia, her visitor frequently asked her questions about her children, for the sheer delight of hearing her describe episodes from her family life. Indeed, this was a theme which, had she not been prompted, she would never have hinted at.

Those were cherished months, during which it was possible to learn numerous details of Dona Lucilia’s long life, narrated directly by her. ✧

Taken, with minor adaptations,
from: *Dona Lucilia*.

Città del Vaticano-Nobleton:
LEV; Heralds of the Gospel,
2013, p.623-632

¹ From the French: pleasant conversation.

² From the French, literally: to know how to do. An expression used by the French to describe the ability to achieve good results in what one does.

³ Due to her advanced age, Dona Lucilia was not told the true state of Dr. Plinio, who was suffering from a serious diabetes crisis.

⁴ From the French: the sweetness of life.

She did not speak of herself or her own problems; she was always inclined to let the other choose the subject of conversation

On the facing page, Dona Lucilia in March of 1968; below, the table set for tea,
in the dining room of her apartment



Leopoldo Remigio



ALMG

Brazil – The Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais State paid an “in memoriam” tribute to Monsignor João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP, by awarding him the Order of Legislative Merit medal on September 16. This is the highest honour of Brazilian parliament, bestowed on individuals and institutions that have distinguished themselves through initiatives of benefit to the population. The founder of the Heralds of the Gospel was represented for this occasion by Rev. Fr. Alex Barbosa de Brito, EP.

Photos: José Lucas Guimarães



Brazil – In September, the Heralds of the Gospel added music to the solemn Eucharist in honour of the Patroness of the Basilica of Our Lady of Bethlehem in Itatiba, followed by the crowning of the statue (photo 3); as well as the Mass and procession of the feast of Our Lady of Copacabana, in the parish dedicated to her in Pinhalzinho (photos 1 and 2). Both celebrations were presided over by Bishop Sérgio Aparecido Colombo of Bragança Paulista Diocese in Sao Paulo State.

Photos: Rafael Miranda



Brazil – On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, the blessing and distribution of the Apostleship of Prayer ribbons took place at Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish in Brasília. Vice President Geraldo Alckmin and his wife, Maria Lúcia Alckmin, were present at the ceremony.



Photos: Ricardo Castelo Branco

Italy – On August 30, another blessed ceremony of consecration as a slave of love to Our Lady, according to the method of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, was held in Rome, this time in the Basilica of San Crisogono in Trastevere. In addition to faithful from the Eternal City, the ceremony also drew devotees of the Blessed Virgin from the cities of Genoa, Verona, Venice, Milan, and Naples, as well as from Umbria, Abruzzo, and Sicily.



Photos: Xavier Jacob

Stefano Pigliacelli

Paraguay – Members of the Heralds in this South American country led celebrations honouring the Patroness of Benjamin Aceval's Cathedral, St. Rose of Lima, on August 29 (photos 1 and 2). On September 7, they participated in the procession and Mass in commemoration of Our Lady at the Parish of the Nativity of Mary, in the town of Quyyquyhó, of the Paraguai department (photo 3).



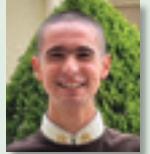
Photos: Francisco Tobón

USA – Four hundred and fifty people participated in the retreat organized and carried out by the Heralds of the Gospel on August 31 at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Miami (photos 1 and 2). On September 6, the faithful of the same parish gathered for the First Saturday of the month ceremony (photo 3).



A Catholic Can Only Be a Hero!

The courage of today's Catholics cannot be that of past eras... It must be greater, it must be complete, it must redouble. It must become heroism.



✠ Rúben Manuel Cunha

To be Catholic, one must be a hero. But how often, to be a hero, one must be Catholic.

The first principle, every Catholic discovers with the impact of their first spiritual battles. To prove the second, let us refer to some events that occurred in the first months of the First World War,¹1914-1918.

The church in ruins...

The colonel's sabre, in a dry and quick stroke, cuts through the morning mist, still tinted by a sun rising over a devastated field, a cemetery of men and buildings. The platoon stops its march at the silent order that gleams on the officer's blade.

"A priest of good will!" the commander calls.

Father Duroy steps out of the formation:

"Present!"

To the left of the complex, a church remained standing, even after the relentless bombardments of the previous day. The French regiment and the church were, on that battlefield in 1914, the only ones that had survived the German artillery.

The officer's voice rises again amid the ruins:

"Who wishes to attend Mass?"

All arms rise. Souls mobilize.

Suddenly, a crash! Some howitzer shells fall a short distance away. Their bursting shrapnel claims two lives and leaves nine wounded. It is the call for the Holy Sacrifice. The regiment storms the church.

Mass begins, the harmonium resounds, and the chants rise. The church trembles. Not only from the voices of the twelve hundred soldiers, baptized not only by the regenerating waters, but by the fire of the previous day and the projectiles falling at an ever-shrinking distance. But the infantry does not tremble: yesterday they faced death,

today they face Life; and Life murmurs in their souls callings more imperious than the terrifying grunts of returning death.

The preacher's voice echoes in the sanctuary. The Prussian cannon, unknowingly, respects it and ceases its barrages for a moment:

"God, who asks us to suffer and to die, gives us, with tribulation, and stronger than it, the superhuman joy of having been chosen to be heroes. Go, then, to your death for France with a prayer on your lips and faith in your hearts. To fall for your country is not to die; it is to take eternal life by storm!"

Once the sermon is over, the notes of the Creed resound powerfully through the vaults. And the temple trembles again: the enemy bombs also sing. The Mass continues solemnly... The troops receive Communion and, like incense mixed with gunpowder, raise their thanksgiving prayer to Heaven.

Finally, the soldier-priest traces the sign of the cross in the air and pronounces the blessing. Within the

"God, who asks us to suffer and to die, gives us with tribulation, and stronger than it, the superhuman joy of having been chosen to be heroes"

Soldiers attending Mass inside a bombarded chapel in Dommartin (France)



sacred walls, constantly trembling, the clang of bayonets that crown the rifles can now be heard. The army prepares itself in its new headquarters.

...and the Blessed Sacrament in danger

But everything suddenly stops. A storm of iron strikes the vaults, which waver, crumble, and collapse. Everyone runs outside. Only Fr. Duroy, still wearing his chasuble over his uniform, remains in the sacred building. A lieutenant points out the danger looming over his head:

“No!” – exclaims the priest, pointing to the tabernacle – “My duty is to save the Blessed Sacrament.”

Speaking and acting, the priest heads toward the tabernacle. The back of the sanctuary then collapses with a tremendous crash. He does not give in. Boulders fall before him, interposing themselves between the Divine General and his soldier. But he presses on. And his example attracts the others:

“Wait, Father,” shout some soldiers returning to the church, “we will help you save the Good Lord!”

Those arms, so accustomed to digging trenches, push aside the stones and beams. The priest opens the tabernacle and takes the Creator in his hands; the soldiers kneel beneath the tottering dome. Once the transfer is complete, the lieutenant orders their immediate departure.

“Excuse me, my lieutenant,” a soldier carrying some flowers placed inside a piece of shell, as an improvised warrior’s bouquet, requests: “Just two minutes, I’ll take this to the Blessed Virgin. It will be an offering from the regiment.”

What men resurrected by forgiveness can do

It is September 6, 1914. On the front lines beside the Marne, there are two hours left before the battle. In the meantime, the worst of clashes occurs: the wait for a battle that they know will

be inevitable, relentless, and merciless. A priest decides to seize the moment:

“My sons,” he says to his brothers-in-arms, “this is going to get heated, and three-quarters of us will not make it back for the afternoon inspection. One bullet or one shell explosion, and then the leap over the wall of existence...”

Private Planteau then speaks on behalf of the others:

“Excuse me, Father. I think this would be the right time for each of us to have a quick word with you, individually of course, because, if you know what I mean...”

Everyone knew exactly what he meant, in fact. Immediately, alone with the priest, each one reveals his moral wounds. The priestly hand rises to heal them.

They are ready! They will demonstrate what a man resurrected by forgiveness can do.

At the foot of the Cross

Two hours pass. The order to attack rings out. Mayhem ensues. Horses and uniforms clash, bayonets are fixed, lead and death rain down. Planteau and his friend Brigeois, who had also been to confession a few minutes before, display feats of bravery. Dargis, the commander, sees them and shouts an order that could only be given to true heroes:

“You two are to climb that hill,” the officer orders, pointing to an unprotected elevation, “and from there you will observe where the enemy artillery is. Then – and here is the hardest part to carry out – you must return and report to me.”

The soldiers try to calculate how many kilograms of molten metal are flying around the hill, but desist. Oh God, what a deluge!...

However, they obey and begin the ascent! When the enemy see two fighters running to the top of the hill, they forget everything else. The reckless duo takes centre stage. Rifles and cannons are fired. And even so, Planteau has the courage for a bit of good humour:

“My friend,” he says breathlessly as he runs, “we’re so insignificant that they point a 77mm battery at us!”

“They certainly take us for General Joffre...”

And so, with a smile, they reach the summit. They prepare to survey the field, but stop reverently. There, high above, a large cross dominates the horizon. They kneel before the Redeemer and pray in the light of the explosions and the sound of the shells that were seeking them:

“My God, You died for us. And, if You so desire, we can repay You in kind. We only ask that, if we fall here, You add us to the honour roll of Your regiment.”

Once the prayer was over, they identified the enemy artillery and intended to descend immediately. At that moment, however, a shell exploded in front of them, and they were both thrown to the ground.

“Are you dead?” Planteau asked.

“I don’t think so. Are you?”

God takes the trench by storm

In the trenches, hours become days, days pass like years, weeks are equivalent to a lifetime and many deaths. And so, months drag by... “The rain of two days ago turned the trench into a quagmire. Yesterday’s battle turned it into a cemetery. Today’s drizzle turns it into a valley of tears. The sky weeps over us: we are already corpses sprinkled with holy water. Yes, another battle is approaching...” These are the gloomy thoughts that assail the trench’s defenders, shrouded as they are in the grey clouds of a sunless day, of a morning that never dawns.

“In these soldiers, the spirit, courage, and hope of victory fade. Translated into the language of war: victory takes ill and dies even before the battle begins...” These are the sombre certainties that contend in the captain’s conscience, daunted by the dark Sunday that is beginning.

Shots whistle continuously over the excavation: the curiosity to raise a head

could cost one's life. But suddenly, a surprise, like an unsuspected bomb, falls on the trench. The clouds remain impregnable against any and all celestial light, the enemy fire never stops shrouding the refuge with its detonations. And yet, the Sun shines in the trench:

"Good day, my sons! I bring you the Good Lord."

With this, the priest, his cassock billowing in the gust of the bullets and armed with the Blessed Sacrament, storms the French dugout. There is virtually no resistance. The men have already surrendered, kneeling before the Lord of Hosts.

"My friends, I bring you Communion, as some of you have requested. It is the Master who comes to visit you, the invincible Captain!"

Officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers feed on the food of the Angels. One or another may give thanks, making Zechariah's words their own: "through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (cf. Lk 1:78-79).

In the trench, faces pale with doubt and eyes dulled by despair take on the colours of the rising sun. Cheer gains ground as if with a flamethrower. Joy floods the ditch. Enthusiasm overflows in what was once a vale of tears!

"Now," exclaims a soldier, "they can come!"

"When will we meet them again?" avidly inquires another.

"There they are!" the sentry finally roars, noticing mobilization for attack in the enemy position.

The triple cry echoes from the mouths of officers and machine guns. From the shelter, a counteroffensive begins, furious yet steady, and as such is irresistible.

All clamber out. The priest is alone with God. He places Blessed Sacrament on a makeshift altar and worships Our Lord to the sound of a concert of roars and gunfire. The war cries compete in their din with the volleys. These begin to fade. The groans and yells then take over centre stage. Thirty minutes pass in this storm. At the feet of the Lord, the sacred minister listens and implores.

Now, however, the voices of victory fill the air. The soldiers return triumphantly to the trenches. They bring with them their wounded comrades. These are the most honoured: their robes are dyed crimson, and the iron medals, embedded by enemy fire, glorify their bodies. They are laid before the Blessed Sacrament.

They die, yes. But before the Divine Sun enclosed in the ciborium, the half-open eyes of these youths rejuvenated by Catholicism contemplate the magnificent dawn of a victory they won and the opening of a Heaven that has won them.

A few years later

How often, to be a hero, one must be Catholic!

Every soldier recognizes the reality of this principle at the first roar of the

cannons: "In war," explains a combatant who witnessed events like those recounted above, "we are better off without bread than without prayer, and when we attend Mass, we rush into battle with irresistible enthusiasm."²

But, to be Catholic, one must be a hero!

And now more than ever. For what is heroism if not courage multiplied by courage? What is courage if not advancing despite danger? And what is war if not multiplying danger by danger?

Well, we are at war! Over the centuries, the Church grows in grace and holiness and, therefore, grows in enmity with the devil, the world, and the flesh. War always becomes more complete, and the courage of today's Catholics cannot be that of past eras. It must be complete, it must redouble. It must become heroism.

The courage to believe in the indestructibility of the Church is not enough. It requires the heroism to remain beneath its vaults, even when they seem to vacillate.

The courage to face life's thousand dangers is not enough. It requires the heroism to, before the cross that looms on our Calvary, press onward toward the holocaust.

The courage to wait for the sun to rise despite the clouds is not enough for us. We must seek, conquer, and make the invincible dawn of the Reign of Mary rise upon a world that is crawling in the mud, in depression, and in darkness.

"In our days," Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira prophetically wrote in his school notebook as a boy, "the courage of times of peace is no longer enough. We must choose between being a hero or a coward." ❖

"In our days," the young Plinio wrote in his school notebook, "the courage of times of peace is no longer enough. We must choose between being a hero or a coward"

French infantrymen firing from a trench



¹ The historical information contained in this article is taken from contemporary reports, found in: GAËLL, René. *Les soutanes sous la mitraille. Scènes de la guerre*. Paris: Henri Gautier, 1915.

² Idem, p.101.

...that there are several Eastern Catholic Churches?

Uniting East and West has always been a challenge, and not even the imperious Alexander the Great achieved such a glorious endeavour. History learned from him that con-

quering territories does not mean uniting peoples... This immense feat, however, was accomplished by the Catholic Church by uniting the two extremes of the globe under one cupula.

Indeed, in addition to the great Latin Church, the twenty-three Eastern Catholic Churches, based primarily in the Near East and India, belong to the one true Church of Christ.

They have privileges granted by the Supreme Pontiffs, who safeguard their age-old traditions. They are governed by a jurisdiction of their own – *sui iuris* – and a code of laws

common to all, the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*. Their rites, in the celebration of the Eucharist, for example, differ from those of the Latin Church. The liturgical vestments and episcopal insignia are also different: in some cases, instead of wearing a mitre, bishops wear a beautiful crown! All this diversity is sheltered under the aegis of the sweet Christ on earth, as an expression of richness, continuity, and communion.

The Eastern Catholic Churches are distinct from those that, beginning in 1054, at the time of the Great Schism of Constantinople, separated from Rome and became part of what they denominated as the Orthodox Church. The filial submission of the former to the Roman Pontiff thus manifests that true unity “can only be unity in faith” (LEO XIV. *Speech*, May 19, 2025). ✦



Holy Mass celebrated in the Catholic Byzantine rite at St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna, on 9/11/2013

...that St. Anthony of Padua was a lieutenant colonel of Brazil?

St. Anthony of Padua – or of Lisbon – was born in Portugal, of noble ancestry, in 1195. He became a Franciscan, died in 1231, and was canonized the following year, more than two hundred and fifty years before the discovery of Brazil. How, then, could the medieval Saint have a connection to the Brazilian Army?

In the 17th century, King Alfonso VI, faced with the imminent Battle of Montes Claros in Portugal, symbolically enlisted St. Anthony in the Portuguese Army. 22,600 Spaniards fought that battle against 20,500 Portuguese. The new soldier rapidly demonstrated the superiority of heavenly intervention,

regaining independence for the Portuguese crown.

Recruited as a private in the 2nd Infantry Regiment of Lagos by order of Alfonso VI, the faithful son of St. Francis joined the Brazilian army in 1685, during the Palmares War. In 1711, by royal charter, on March 21, the king of Portugal appointed him captain of Brazil for his assistance in the battle against the French corsair Duclerc.

Later, in 1814, Don John VI conferred on the Saint the rank of lieutenant colonel, with the due remuneration of eighty thousand réis, which was transferred to the Franciscan convent in Rio de Janeiro. Unfortunately, former president

Hermes da Fonseca ordered the suspension of this salary...

Despite having lost his earthly remuneration, St. Anthony – who, above all, was a Franciscan and, therefore, a son of poverty – retained the most important thing: the responsibility of protecting such a vast nation and the affection of the Brazilian people! ✦

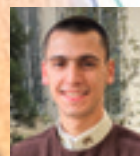
St. Anthony of Padua - Museo Civico, Vicenza (Italy)



All... Except One!

The monument depicted in these pages takes on another dimension when analysed from the perspective of its builders. We therefore invite the reader on a journey to Rome in the year 93 AD.

✧ Ângelo Francisco Neto Martins



By Jupiter, what a good idea Vipsanius Agrippa had when he built this temple! The Pantheon: what majesty, what conviction, what strength! And – between you and me – what a masterstroke... Agrippa well deserves to have his name engraved on its portico.

“Dignus Roma locus, quo deus omnis eat – Rome is a worthy place for all the gods to gather,” sang the poet Ovid. Yes, and in this Roman Pantheon, the truce of the Olympians was finally signed.

Despite its age – we are now over a century after its construction – this jewel still shines with youthful vigour. The sun has not faded the multi-coloured marble, the bronze doors have withstood the ravages of time, the sixteen monolithic columns support, as elegant and powerful as the arms of our athletes, the dome covered in silver plates.

And the interior holds an even greater marvel. Let us enter! Let us enter, for this is the right of all Roman citizens. The floor is marvellous, its polished stones reflect-

ing the sun, which pours in through a nine-meter-diameter opening. The dome... There we have a veritable sky of stone. At 43.5 metres in height and 43.5 metres in diameter, the ceiling forms a perfect hemisphere, resembling the celestial vault.

But let us take our eyes off the sky and turn them to the gods. They, like us, are on earth. Each of the numerous niches houses a divinity. There stands Minerva Chryselephantine, mother of the happily reigning Emperor Domitian. Beside her, Jupiter the Avenger threatens to tear the clouds into lightning bolts and mortals into pieces. Venus, a little further on, displays jewels that are particularly earthly, for they belonged to Cleopatra. Bacchus, in his corner, laughs drunkenly.

They once bore different names – like Athena and Zeus – but also present here are those who declined the change of title and who nevertheless make up this intercontinental committee: the Phrygian Cybele; the Phoenician Astarte; the god Attis; Baal, the Syro-Phoenician infant-slayer; an Egyptian delegation presided over by Osiris-Serapis, accompanied by his





Rabax63 (CC by-sa 4.0)

**Façade of the Pantheon, Rome; in the background, a view of the building's interior.
On the previous page, sculptures of Jupiter, Athena e Bacchus**

spouse, Isis; Mithra, the Persian patron of light; Adonis of Byblos; Tammuz; Malakbel of Palmyra; Dushara the Arab... along with a few other imported deities.

As you can see, Asians are in fashion; this, in fact, was what prompted Juvenal's conservative and satirical grumble a few days ago: "*Iam pridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes* – The Syrian river Orontes has long since flowed into the Tiber."² That day, a discussion worthy of Mars' presidency took place in the Senate. But diplomacy prevailed. Or rather, faith...

Here in the Pantheon, however, peace reigns, thanks to the engineer who designed it. This perfect circle was created to avoid any dispute between the gods: none of them holds a higher position. Moreover, there is no centre. The place toward which they turn is reserved solely for humans. What can we do? It is the only way to bring them all together.

All... except one. One who would not resign Himself to this condition of equality. He is the God of Christians! And when, the other day, we discussed the mass immigration of eastern gods,

this Jesus Christ was barred entry. We are, in fact, aware of at least two crimes He perpetrated against the society of men and gods: exclusivism and radicalism.

Exclusivism: He is proclaimed as the only divinity by His followers. If He were content, at least, to be the first among the first, like Jupiter, we would still tolerate Him. But no! He is not one among others; He is the only one, Christians repeat.

Radicalism: He teaches meekness, chastity, detachment from earthly goods, faith in eternal life, belief in a final resurrection; worst of all, this doctrine translates into works. If He did not preach continence, the hedonists would worship Him; if His law had no practical expression, the philosophers would praise Him; if He did not speak of a resurrection, the Stoics would have believed in Him.

The conclusion was more than simple: Domitian, our august Caesar, decreed the persecution and death of the Christians. Unless, of course, they abjure that creed in favour of a more moderate position. Moderation... is fundamental. A religion that believes

itself to be true has no right to exist. A single, infinite God has no place in the Pantheon, especially when He brings with Him a morality.

* * *

These were the thoughts that filled the mind of a Roman patrician during the second persecution launched against the Catholic Church in 93 AD, the year in which, once again, the pagans realized that this religion could not mix with others. What did all this result in? Centuries of syncretism, more diplomatic than sincere, crumbled under the blood of Jesus Christ's disciples, and the prison of ancient and false divinities, the Pantheon yielded its columns to the Church of St. Mary and the Martyrs. The one God had won.

But this Roman, who existed under the name Tacitus, still exists today, perhaps unconsciously, deep down inside those who desire the return of the Pantheon and, therefore, the ruin of the Church. ✨

¹ OVID. *Fastorum*. L.IV, v.270.

² JUVENAL. *Satira*. L.III, v.62.

Virgin and Child, by Simone di
Filippo Benvenuti - Galleria
Estense, Modena (Italy)



Confidence, Joy and Courage

The maternal love of Mary has the regenerating power to elevate and sanctify a soul; She is the Mediatrix of the graces that are necessary for the justification of her beloved ones. Let us trust in Our Lady at all times, always remembering her extreme indulgence towards us, the compassion with which She regards the miseries that each one of us has.

If we are not completely convinced of the mercy of Mary Most Holy, we will accomplish nothing good. Cultivating this certainty, our souls will be filled with confidence, joy, and courage. Having the Mother of Divine Providence as our own Mother, nothing should dishearten us. She will resolve everything if, with confidence, we implore her maternal help.

Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira