



HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

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*“To be in Your presence
and minister to You”*

A Winning Paternal Kindness

I was about eleven years old when I had the grace to meet Don Rinaldi for the first time, at the festive Oratory of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. All of them called him by the affectionate title “Signor Direttore”; all of them ran joyfully to meet him, like daughters to meet their father. His austere, yet so paternal, countenance, his kind smile, and his gaze that lingered especially on the smallest ones immediately made me think of Don Bosco, of whom I had already heard. I timidly approached, like the others, to kiss his hand and I felt his gaze rest on me, perhaps because he had never seen me before – for he knew all his little youngsters well. That gaze, accompanied by such a paternal smile, won me over. [...]

His spiritual guidance was simple, direct, clear, Salesian in the fullest sense of the word, gentle and strong at the same time. It only took him a few minutes to clarify one’s state of the conscience, which spontaneously opened itself to the touch of his easy and kind words: nothing could be hidden from him; not only that, but everyone wanted to and were able to tell him everything. His advice was brief, but always appropriate; it translated into a practical and sure

purpose, always aiming to solidly instruct, and to uproot whatever needed to be eliminated. More than to defects, he gave great importance to the habitual attitude of one’s soul, helping to support the weaker areas, while indicating the means to strengthen them. [...]

Never useless words, inopportune questions; always encouraging, but adamant; always fatherly, but firm. [...]

He accustomed us to sacrifice, without giving it much importance. When I expressed my pains and sorrows to him, these were always, according to him, things of little importance. And it was not for a lack of understanding that he took such an attitude – for I realized that I had been well understood, especially by the paternal ad-

vice he gave me – but because he wanted to see me grow strong spiritually.

He would say: “Like a good soldier, a true Christian should never be afraid of battles.” And it was excellent that he accustomed me to these struggles from a young age, because life always holds new and harder ones for us.



Blessed Philip Rinaldi, in 1929

CERIA, SDB, Eugenio. *Vita del Servo di Dio Filippo Rinaldi*. Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1948, p.504-506

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



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

In some churches, we receive the Holy Host dipped in the wine, that is, the Body and Blood of Jesus, during Communion. In others, however, only priests and deacons receive the Blood; lay people receiving only the Body. Father, could you explain why the Blood of Jesus is not also offered to lay people?

Wilson Zanola (via e-mail)

In every Eucharistic celebration, Jesus makes Himself present to be offered in sacrifice and received in Communion.

In the Catholic Churches of the Eastern rite – Melkite, Maronite and Ukrainian, among others – it is prescribed that Holy Communion be habitually distributed to the faithful under the species of consecrated bread and wine. In the Latin Rite Catholic Church, it is usually administered only under the species of consecrated bread, although there are some exceptions, as will be seen below.

The *Code of Canon Law* thus establishes in canon 925: “Holy communion is to be given under the form of bread alone, or under both species according to the norm of the liturgical laws, or even under the form of wine alone in a case of necessity.”

At Masses, the main celebrant and concelebrants, if any, should receive Communion under both species, that is, they should receive the Sacred Host consecrated there, as well as from the chalice (cf. *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Redemptionis sacramentum*, n.98).

Communion under both forms is also permitted to priests who cannot celebrate or concelebrate the Holy Sacrifice, to deacons, and to all those who exercise some office in the Mass (cf. *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, n. 283).

As for the faithful, Communion may be administered to them under both species, generally by intinction – when the priest dips the Sacred Host in the consecrated Wine – in certain circumstances, such as: to first communicants; for the bride and groom during the celebration of Marriage within Mass; on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, at the discretion of the celebrant.

The Diocesan Bishop has the faculty to permit Communion under both species, whenever it seems appropriate to the priest to whose pastoral care a particular community is entrusted, provided that three requirements are observed (cf. *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, n. 283):

1. That the faithful are well instructed in this regard;
2. That there is no danger of profanation of the Blessed Sacrament;

3. That the rite does not become difficult due to the large number of participants or for any other reason.

To avoid profanation, care must be taken in the manner of administering the Eucharist. It is precisely for this reason that it becomes more difficult to give Communion under both kinds when there are numerous participants at Holy Mass.

Finally, it is important that the faithful be instructed that in the Sacred Host is present the Body of Christ, but also, concomitantly, His Blood, Soul and Divinity; and in the consecrated Wine is present the Blood of Christ, but equally His Body, Soul and Divinity (cf. CCC 1374). “This is why it is absolutely true that under each of the species is contained exactly the same as in both together, for Christ is wholly present under the species of bread and under any part of this species, and equally wholly present under the species of wine and under its parts” (Council of Trent. *Decree on the Eucharist*: DH 1641).

In the Sequence for the Mass of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, we find this beautiful teaching: “Wherefore now, with adoration, we, the host of our salvation, consecrate from bread and wine. Hear, what holy Church maintaineth, that the bread its substance changeth, into Flesh, the wine to Blood. [...] Flesh from bread, and Blood from wine, yet is Christ in either sign, all entire, confessed to be. They, who of Him here partake, sever not, nor rend, nor break: but, entire, their Lord receive.”

Dear Wilson, Communion under both species certainly reflects more fully the character of the Eucharist as a sacred banquet, and our impression is greater when we also receive the consecrated Wine. Much more important than this, however, is the commitment to minimize the possibilities of profanation of the Blessed Sacrament. And this is why the Holy Church allows Communion under both kinds only in special circumstances.

However, as the subject lends itself to multiple and very interesting developments that would exceed the limits of this response, I suggested to the editorial board of *Heralds of the Gospel Magazine* that they write a more detailed article on the subject, a proposal that was accepted. We will return to the subject soon!

ANGELIC AND MARIAN KEYNOTES OF THE PRIESTHOOD



The Holy Trinity encompasses the most sublime of liturgies, in which the Father begets the Son and from Both proceeds the Holy Spirit. Through the Incarnation, the Son, as Priest, glorifies the Father by offering the prayers and oblations of His entire Mystical Body, to which even the Angels belong, as St. Thomas Aquinas affirms (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, III, q.8, a.4).

On earth, Holy Mass is the prayer *par excellence*, celebrated in the person of Christ Himself – *in persona Christi* – by the ordained minister. The latter’s role is to be a mediator – pontiff – between God and men, offering them sacred things, as suggested by the etymology of the Latin word for priest: *sacra dans*.

In contrast to certain functionalist conceptions of the priesthood, Sacred Scripture defines it as a calling “to stand and minister in the name of the Lord, [...] for ever” (Dt 18:5). This concept is transmitted by the Rite of Ordination, in which the one to be ordained responds to the convocation: “*Adsum!* – Here I am!” From the beginning, there is a total willingness to be before the Lord, “to see Him and be seen by Him,” as in the Curé of Ars’ definition of prayer.

Apostolic tradition summarized this essence of the priesthood in an expression from Eucharistic Prayer II, which dates back to the second century: “*Astare coram te et tibi ministrare* – To be in your presence and minister to You.” The earthly Liturgy is a participation in the heavenly liturgy, in which myriads of Angels are constantly standing (cf. Dn 7:10; 12:1) in the presence of the Lord (cf. Tb 12:15; Lk 1:19), in contemplation and adoration (cf. Rv 4:4-11).

In fact, through the exclusivity of their service – *diakonia* – priests participate in the function of “spirits sent forth to serve” (Heb 1:14). According to St. Ambrose (cf. *Expositio Psalmi. In Psalmum CXVIII*. Sermo 10, n.14: PL 15, 1334), the “standing” of the Angels means nothing other than service, and so too the sacred ministers were ordained to *minister*, that is, to serve in a total consecration of themselves “as a living sacrifice”, and “holy” (Rom 12:1).

In addition to this angelic note, it can be seen that the priesthood has an intrinsically Marian root. In fact, St. Gabriel announced to the Virgin: “The Lord is with You!” (Lk 1:28), manifesting her constant union with the Most High. The jubilant soul of Our Lady joined the Angels who sang in the presence of the Most High the *Gloria* (cf. Lk 2:14), which inaugurates all solemnities. Finally, always standing (cf. Jn 19:25), She joined in the liturgical act *par excellence*, the redemptive sacrifice of the Eternal Priest on Calvary.

In her response to the Archangel, Mary Most Holy also revealed her unconditional conformity to the divine will: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38). Likewise, at the Wedding at Cana, “the Mother of Jesus was there” (Jn 2:1) to serve and intercede with her Son in every need. Finally, at the foot of the Cross, Christ entrusted to her an ordained minister, John, who received her as his Mother, prophesying her in Revelation as the “great portent” (Rv 12:1).

Amidst contemporary hyper-activism and the lamentably lackluster Liturgy prevalent in some milieus, it is opportune to emphasize these angelic and Marian keynotes of the priesthood, in order to return to its essence: to live for Christ, in His presence, in that of Mary and of the Angels, and abnegated in their service. ✠



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

Photo: Stephen Nami



The Central Duty of the Priest

We must learn to increasingly understand the sacred Liturgy in all its essence, to develop a living familiarity with it, so that it becomes the soul of our daily life.

THE ACT THAT BRINGS US INTO CONTACT WITH GOD

The Church becomes visible in many ways: in charitable action, in mission projects, in the personal apostolate that every Christian must carry out in his own walk of life. However the place in which she is fully experienced as Church is in the Liturgy; it is the act in which we believe that God enters our reality and we can encounter Him, we can touch Him. It is the act in which we come into contact with God: He comes to us and we are illuminated by Him.

BENEDICT XVI.
General Audience, 3/10/2012

A SACRED ACTION SURPASSING ALL OTHERS

The Liturgy [...] is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek. [...]

Every liturgical celebration, being an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred

action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree.

ST. PAUL VI. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, 4/12/1963

MEANS BY WHICH THE PRIESTLY MISSION OF CHRIST IS PROLONGED

The divine Redeemer has so willed it that the priestly life, begun with the supplication and sacrifice of His mortal Body, should continue without intermission down the ages in His Mystical Body which is the Church. That is why He established a visible priesthood to offer everywhere the clean oblation [...].

In obedience, therefore, to her Founder's behest, the Church prolongs the priestly mission of Jesus Christ mainly by means of the sacred Liturgy. She does this in the first place at the altar, where constantly the Sacrifice of the Cross is represented and with a single difference in the manner of its offering, renewed.

PIUS XII.
Mediator Dei, 20/11/1947

TO STAND IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE: THE "PROFESSION" OF THE PRIEST

What does this "being a priest of Jesus Christ" mean? The Second Canon of our Missal, probably compiled

in Rome already at the end of the 2nd century, describes the essence of the priestly ministry with the words with which, in the Book of Deuteronomy (cf. Dt 18:5, 7), the essence of the Old Testament priesthood is described: *astare coram te et tibi ministrare*. There are therefore two duties that define the essence of the priestly ministry: in the first place, "to stand in His presence."

In the Book of Deuteronomy this is read in the context of the preceding disposition, according to which priests do not receive any portion of land in the Holy Land – they live of God and for God. They did not attend to the usual work necessary to sustain daily life. Their profession was to "stand in the Lord's presence" – to look to Him, to be there for Him. Hence, ultimately, the word indicated a life in God's presence, and with this also a ministry of representing others. As the others cultivated the land, from which the priest also lived, so he kept the world open to God, he had to live with his gaze on Him.

BENEDICT XVI.
Homily, 20/3/2008

THE SOUL OF DAILY LIFE

Now let us move on to the second word that the Second Canon repeats from the Old Testament text – "to stand in Your presence and serve You." [...] We must learn to increasingly understand the sacred Liturgy in all its essence, to develop a living familiarity

with it, so that it becomes the soul of our daily life. It is then that we celebrate in the correct way; it is then that the *ars celebrandi*, the art of celebrating, emerges by itself. In this art there must be nothing artificial. If the Liturgy is the central duty of the priest, this also means that prayer must be a primary reality [...].

No one is closer to his master than the servant who has access to the most private dimensions of his life. In this sense “to serve” means closeness, it requires familiarity. This familiarity also bears a danger: when we continually encounter the sacred it risks becoming habitual for us. In this way, reverential fear is extinguished. [...] We must ceaselessly struggle against this becoming accustomed to the extraordinary reality, against the indifference of the heart, always recognizing our insufficiency anew and the grace that there is in the fact that He consigned Himself into our hands.

BENEDICT XVI.
Homily, 20/3/2008

A DIGNIFIED LITURGY, EVEN IN POOR COMMUNITIES

The Liturgy should always be dignified, even in small and poor communities; it should be open to the active and informed participation of the different members of the assembly, each according to their category and vocation; that it judiciously use the various authorised forms of expression, without indulging in fanciful, improvised or poorly studied creativity, which the norms do not allow, precisely because it would distort their meaning; that the Liturgy truly initiates into the mys-



Leandro Souza

**The priest's vocation is to “stand before the Lord”,
to gaze upon Him and to live for Him; thus the
sacred minister keeps the world open to God.**

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

tery of God, through its atmosphere of recollection and the quality of the readings and songs. [...] Let us ensure that our Masses reveal the “mystery of Faith” and have its appeal.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Speech, 24/9/1982

THE CENTRALITY OF CHRIST MUST STAND OUT IN THE CELEBRATION

The Liturgy is not the memory of past events, but is the living presence of the Paschal Mystery of Christ who transcends and unites times and places. If in the celebration the centrality of Christ did not emerge, we would not have Christian Liturgy, totally dependent on the Lord and sustained by His creative presence. [...]

It is not, therefore, the individual – priest or member of the faithful –

or the group celebrating the Liturgy, but the Liturgy is primarily God's action through the Church which has her own history, her rich tradition and her creativity. This universality and fundamental openness, which is proper to the whole of the Liturgy, is one of the reasons why it cannot be conceived of or modified by the individual community or by experts, but must be faithful to the forms of the universal Church.

BENEDICT XVI.
General Audience,
3/10/2012

AN IMAGE OF ETERNITY

In a Liturgy completely centred on God, we can see, in its rituals and chant, an image of eternity.[...] In the light of this, I ask you to celebrate the sacred Liturgy with your gaze fixed on God

within the communion of saints, the living Church of every time and place, so that it will truly be an expression of the sublime beauty of the God who has called men and women to be His friends!

BENEDICT XVI.
Speech, 9/9/2007

A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

The mystery brought about in the Liturgy is truly great. It opens a glimpse of Heaven on earth, and the perennial hymn of praise rises from the community of believers in unison with the hymn of heavenly Jerusalem: “*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth.*”

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Spiritus et Sponsa, 4/12/2003



The Prophet of the Most High



✠ Fr. Hamilton José Naville, EP

*Among
the many
virtues of the
Precursor,
true humility
shines forth,
which consists
above all in
defending
the glory of
God, and self-
effacement*

On this second Sunday of Advent, the figure of St. John the Baptist appears, in the writing of St. Matthew, preaching in the desert of Judea. He dressed roughly and ate wild honey and locusts, in contrast to the worldly customs of the time. Inhabitants of Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan sought him out to hear his preaching and to be baptized.

Despite his humble appearance, he was relentless against evil. Addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees, who mingled with the crowd to observe him, he warned: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” (Mt 3:7).

He so named them because they always begot more children of perdition and for perdition! St. Thomas¹ explains that it is praiseworthy to suffer with patience the injuries done to us personally, but it is extremely wicked to excuse those committed against God.

How similar these fiery words are to the warnings pronounced by the Saviour against these same people, when He rebuked them: “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?” (Mt 23:33).

During Advent, the Precursor invites us to change our

lives through vigilance, prayer, and penance. A radical and true interior conversion, not pharisaical and deceitful – that is, made up only of outward appearances – nor thirsty for privileges like that of the Sadducees, for it is useless to say that “we have Abraham as our father” (Mt 3:9) if we do not produce fruits of holiness.

John, that child who leapt for joy in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth, when he heard Mary’s voice (cf. Lk 1:44); John, whom Jesus said was the greatest among those born of women (cf. Mt 11:11); John, who declared himself unworthy to untie the straps of Our Lord’s sandals (cf. Jn 1:27); John, the divine messenger whose soul shone with so many virtues... how well we would do to imitate him in his humility.

St. Teresa of Jesus² teaches us that humility consists in walking in truth, and St. Thomas³ affirms that it is completed by magnanimity. Without this, humility ceases to be real and becomes faintheartedness and even cowardice.

The Baptist did not cower before Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, but rebuked him for his wickedness and sin, and for the love of truth he was martyred. When, at Salome’s request, his head was presented on a platter, from his half-closed eyes and his virginal lips still echoed the cry: “It is not lawful for you” (M 14:4).

Let us follow the example of the prophet of the Most High and love his teachings. Let us also be champions of the Holy Church without human respect, always defending the whole truth. Humble, vigilant, and with our lamps lit, let us wait for the Child God who is about to be born. ✠

St. John the Baptist -
Notre-Dame Cathedral,
Paris

Sérgio Hollmann

¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.108, a.1, ad 2.

² Cf. ST. TERESA OF JESUS. *Moradas del castillo interior*. Moradas sextas, c.10, n.8.

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., q.133, a.2.

Rejoice and Admire!



✠ Fr. Felipe Garcia López, EP

When we consider the words of the prophet Isaiah chosen for this Sunday’s second reading – “The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, [...] and shall flourish like the lily” (35:1) – we see how often God takes pleasure in suspending the rules He created for nature. For it is certainly not normal for a desert to blossom like a lily...

A similar image was used by Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira to symbolize the rebirth of the Holy Church in recent times, through Our Lady, as prophesied by St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort:¹ “The lily born in the mud, in the night amidst the tempest.” The world today – stained as it is by the mud of envy, immersed in the night of sadness, agitated by the storm of comparison – will yet see with infinite joy God’s reward, for He comes to save (cf. Is 35:4, 10).

It is up to us to fight for this rebirth. How? The Gospel shows us the way.

Few in history have represented the figure of a lily sprung up during the night as did St. John the Baptist. Amidst the decadence of the pre-Messianic period, even among the chosen people, the Precursor summed up the faith of the ancient patriarchs, the hope of the prophets and the charity of souls eager for the coming of the Saviour. He was a man of integrity – so much so that Our Lord did not spare him praise: “more than a prophet,” “among those born of women there has risen no one greater” (Mt 11:9, 11), as the Gospel tells us.

Now, since St. John’s gifts and virtues came from Jesus Christ, He did not need to praise them, for everything belongs to Him. However, the God-Man wanted to leave us the example of a forgotten virtue: admiration.

It is through the rapt contemplation of divine reflections in creatures that we prepare ourselves for eternal admiration in beatitude. As Dr. Plinio rightly observed, “when we admire something

superior to ourselves, we are ultimately paying homage to God.”²

On the other hand, Msgr. João affirms that admiration “is one of the wisest ways of practising love of God in [our neighbour’s] regard”; and when society allows itself to be permeated by this virtue, “it may rightly be called the Reign of Mary, because it will be pervaded with the goodness of the Wise and Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God.”³

The envious person, on the contrary, is deeply hateful, as St. Basil points out: “Dogs become tame if someone feeds them, but the envious become more enraged by benefits and favours.”⁴

Those who admire are joyful: *gaudete*, rejoice, admire! This is the formula for the lily of the Catholic Church to flourish!

Let us ask Mary Most Holy, an exemplary admiring soul, to instil in us her enchantment with the Holy Church, its saints and prophets, its Tradition and the treasure of its eternal doctrine. ✠

Today’s Gospel teaches us how the lily of the Holy Church can blossom amidst the mud of today’s world

¹ Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, n.50.

² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Admiração desinteressada e inocente [Selfless and Innocent Admiration]. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XXIII. No. 267 (June, 2020), p.19.

³ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. The Joy of Admiring. In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2014, v. IV, p.220.

⁴ ST. BASIL THE GREAT. *Homilia XI*. De invidia, n.3: PG 31, 378.



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Two Silences... and One Lesson

✚ Fr. Lucas Garcia Pinto, EP



*In a world
shaken by
turmoil in
people's souls,
we are invited
to find
humility and
peace through
interior
silence*

Some time ago, a challenge launched by an internationally renowned company made headlines: they offered a large sum of money to anyone who could remain for more than an hour in a room isolated from any outside noise.

Despite the prize, which seemed so simple to achieve, people were unable to stay long in the room, listening only to their breathing and heartbeat. After a while, they felt distressed at being left alone with their own thoughts. Today's world has made us unaccustomed to silence...

This Sunday's Gospel, however, wants to show us the importance of interior silence.

In St. Matthew's account (cf. Mt 1:18-24), we contemplate two silences: that of humility and that of the heart.

First, we see Mary Most Holy who, after receiving the visit of the Archangel St. Gabriel announcing to her the highest dignity granted to a creature, that of being the Mother of God, remains silent. She does not go out into the streets drawing

the attention of others to the divine mystery that was taking place in her virginal womb, nor does She seek to exalt herself for the greatness of her condition. She does not feel entitled to reveal the unspeakable miracle She carries within her, even to her most chaste spouse, perhaps thinking: "If that which is in me is the work of God, He Himself will reveal it to whom He deems necessary." It was the silence of humility, which keeps divine gifts within oneself and does not boast of what has been received from the Creator.

On the other hand, we see St. Joseph, a righteous man, who had received her as his wife through signs from Heaven and had ratified with her the vow that both would remain virgins for the love of God. However, he perceives in Our Lady the characteristic signs of gestation...

A witness to Mary's holiness, and an ardent devotee of hers like no other in history, at no time did the Glorious Patriarch mistrust her integrity in the slightest. On the contrary, he immediately perceived that a sublime mystery surrounded his virginal spouse, a mystery so lofty that he was unworthy of knowing it... And if this was God's will, the most perfect attitude was to accept it and withdraw into the silence of his heart.

Both silences are the fruit of the serenity characteristic of those who desire to serve God and are always willing to renounce their own will in order to fulfil His.

The world, however, accustoms men to agitation, robbing them of their peace of mind and their ability to withdraw into themselves and accept the will of Providence. It is this constant noise that unbalances souls.

Let us learn from Mary the silence of humility, never becoming conceited about the gifts we owe to the Creator. And let us know, like St. Joseph, how to silence our anxieties or afflictions, always accepting God's will, for this will bring the dawn of His manifestation. ✚

"The Dream of St. Joseph" by Miguel Cabrera –
Museum of America, Madrid



A Decisive Choice

✚ Fr. Leonardo Miguel Barraza, EP



St. Isidore¹ recounts that the eagle received its name due to its keen vision – *aquila*, from *acumen oculorum*, in Latin. He also mentions that the bird stares at the sun's rays without closing its eyes and holds its young so as to expose them to this radiance, considering those who keep their eyes open worthy and abandoning those who blink, as they are a disgrace to their species.

These intriguing etymological reflections come to mind, by association of ideas, when we read the prologue to the Gospel of St. John, proclaimed in the Liturgy at the Mass of the Nativity of the Lord during the Day. The penetrating vision with which this sublime hymn begins prompts St. Irenaeus of Lyon² to attribute precisely the allegory of the eagle to its author.

In fact, at the opening of his Gospel, the Beloved Disciple – as the worthy bearer of the aquiline symbol – directs his gaze directly to the divinity of the “Sun of Justice” (Mal 4:2), Jesus Christ Our Lord. And he announces that this Child, the Son of Mary contemplated today at His Nativity, is the Divine Word who, existing before the centuries of human history, created all things (cf. Jn 1:1-3).

In the following verses, St. John masterfully summarizes the themes of his Gospel, among which stands out one that is rarely commented on at Christmas. It would seem that, just as the eagle subjects its young to a test by exposing them to the sun, he also wants all his listeners to turn their admiring gaze to contemplate the divine light.

In fact, the Virgin Apostle is the only Evangelist who begins his account by narrating that Jesus' coming into the world caused a conflict. Yes, around this gentle Child, who out of love “became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (1:14), a radical antagonism took shape: light and darkness (cf. Jn 1:5); Jesus and the world (cf. Jn 1:10); faith and unbelief (cf. Jn 1:7); those who believe and welcome Him receive divine life and heavenly glory, becoming children of God (cf. Jn 1:12), while those who reject Him remain in darkness and eternal

death. This is the tragic and grandiose choice that St. John presents in this hymn, from which we cannot avert our gaze.

Such considerations may undoubtedly seem unpleasant in a Christmas celebration. But in the current religious and moral crisis that the world and especially the Church are suffering, can we fail to see this reality?

Will we be children of light or of darkness? This is a key decision for our eternal destiny.

Faced with this prospect, no one has the right to despair or lose heart, for with Mary Most Holy as our intercessor, we will receive abundant graces to welcome the ineffable light of the Child Jesus and thus participate in His Kingdom of love for ever and ever. ✚

¹ Cf. ST. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE. *Etimologías*. L.XII, c.7, n.10-11. Madrid: BAC, 2004, p.939.

² Cf. ST. IRENAEUS OF LYON. *Contre les hérésies*. L.III, c.11, n.8: SC 211, 165.



Detail from “Madonna delle Ombre” by
Fra Angelico – National Museum
of St. Mark, Florence (Italy)

*Amidst
the joys of
Christmas,
the prologue
to the Gospel
of St. John
presents us
with a choice:
to be a child
of light or
of darkness*

The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against the Family!



✠ Fr. Alessandro Schurig, EP

Family. Few words resonate in our ears with such sweetness, gentleness and joy. Is there anyone who, having received the gift of enjoying the blessings of a true home, does not remember it with deep emotion?

On the other hand, does the reader know of any institution that has been the object of more blatant hatred, more diabolical persecution, more infamous profanations than the family? Ask the Serpent of Paradise, who attacked the first couple in history... and it will not be difficult to find the answer.

Why is the family so sublime? Why does it make the forces of evil so uncomfortable? Today's feast brings us the answer: God wanted to be born into a family, with a father and mother. He could have dispensed with one or the other, but He chose not to, in order to establish an archetype for the family and, in a way, to give rise to the Holy Church, which can well be defined as the gathering of people for the sake of love and praise of Jesus Christ. There was no other reason for the union between Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph in the years they were together with the Child Jesus.

But there too we see the brutal and bloody fury of the devil who, using Herod as his instrument, destroyed hundreds of other families in order to destroy "The" family...

Now, in today's media, in literature, in the thousand voices that are whispering evil advice or conspiring to lead young people into impurity or adults

into adultery, is not the same fury at work that was directed at the Holy Family?

The most effective defence that Catholics can raise against so many attacks is to see the family through this sublime prism, which will bear the fruit of great respect, in accordance with St. Paul's exhortation to the Colossians:

"Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, [...] And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection" (3:12, 14).

How often do we witness homes that deteriorate, fall apart and even – oh, what sorrow! – completely break up, because they did not know how to maintain an atmosphere of charity, elevation and courtesy in the home, but allowed impiety, vulgarity, egalitarianism and disrespect in their dealings to creep in.

Let us look today at the Holy Family. How many vicissitudes they must have endured in their sudden flight by night into Egypt! Yet it is inconceivable to imagine St. Joseph waking Our Lady with agitation and brutality, or taking the Child Jesus with ill will, to begin the journey.

They were a model for the Holy Church, and today they are an example for the institution of the family. If every family were to understand the very high role it is called to play, we would be able to apply to it without hesitation what Our Lord said of His Church: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18)! ✠

May every family understand the very important role it is called to play as a small "church" in this paganized world



"The flight into Egypt" by Gentile da Fabriano – Uffizi Gallery, Florence (Italy)

Reproduction

SAVED BY CHRISTMAS

It was dusk on December 24, 1795. An intensely cold winter was ravaging the regions of Brittany, reminding a poor peasant of the holy night *par excellence* when the Saviour came into the world.

However, the situation in which he found himself differed tragically from that first Christmas: the song of the Angels was not heard, the star of the Magi did not shine, and the maternal gaze of Our Lady, together with the paternal benevolence of St. Joseph, was replaced by the hatred of four revolutionary villains who had tied him to a tree...

The young man was one of the fervent Catholics who lived in north-western France, known as the *Chouans*, who resisted the violence of the French Revolution in the name of religion and the monarchy.

He had been brutally tormented, and now listened in anguish to the taunts of his persecutors, feeling death approaching for, in times of war like those, being a captured man meant being a doomed man!

"If only I could kill more than a thousand of your kind with a single shot!" growled one of the revolutionaries.

The prisoner, with his head bowed, said nothing. Nor was it necessary for him to do so; God would speak for him.

Suddenly, a crystal-clear melody broke the silence of those vast expanses. Sometimes deep and solemn, sometimes high-pitched and innocent, bells rang in the distance. Surprised, thinking it was an alarm signal from the resistance, the republicans asked the *Chouan* what it meant.

"It is Christmas," he replied, "the bells are ringing for Midnight Mass."

Christmas! That word echoed in their hardened hearts, awakening a world of fond memories: Midnight Masses attended with the family, enchanting nativity scenes and brightly lit Christmas trees, songs of diaphanous candour, eagerly awaited gifts, delicious dinners... in short, everything that could embellish a true and holy Christmas whispered irresistible invitations to conversion to their souls. Innocence, already agonizing in those souls, made its last appeals... and seemed to be answered.

After an eloquent silence, the revolutionaries addressed the unfortunate man with a certain compassion. They asked him where he was from and what his name was.

"I am from Coglès and my name is Branche d'Or," declared the *Chouan*.

"Is your mother still alive? Do you have a wife and children?"

A hoarse groan was his only answer, and in the flickering light of the bonfire, a tear glistened on his cheek. The soldiers glanced at each other, abashed. They tried to contain their desire to release him, while the bells continued to ring in the surrounding area.

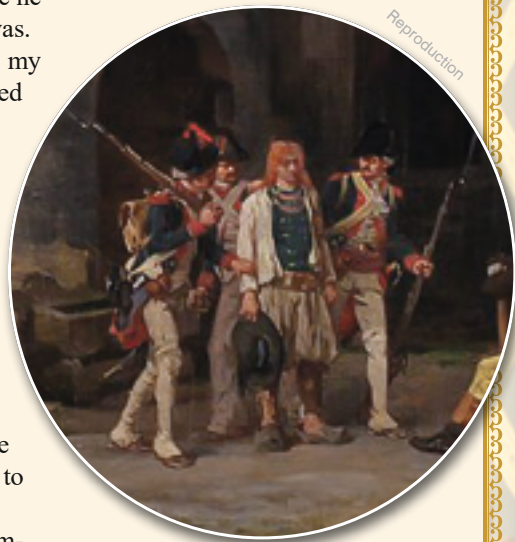
"You can go," said the commander to the counter-revolutionary, untying his bonds.

The Breton raised his head, unable to believe what he was hearing.

"Get out of here, fast! Run away! You're free."

Imagining this to be just another insult, the *Chouan* stood up and stared at the revolutionaries for a moment. A light, miraculous as the star of Bethlehem, seemed to glimmer in the visage of those murderers. Realizing it was true, he fled into the forest towards his village. He had been saved by Christmas...

What tenderness, sublimity and holy unction accompanies this feast! Its bells ring out to all, even those who have strayed from God. To the righteous it echoes as a hymn of consolation; to sinners, as an invitation to renounce their inveterate vices. And what about us? What will we do with the graces of this Christmas? ❖



The young "Chouan" listened in anguish to the taunts of his persecutors, feeling death approaching... Being captured meant being doomed!

"The Spy" by Victor Henri Juglar –
Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology,
Châlons-en-Champagne (France)



The Supreme Priesthood

By assuming human nature in the Incarnation, Our Lord became the perfect Mediator and the Pontiff *par excellence*, since, being Man and God, there could be no one superior to Him!

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

The modern world, so devoid of symbols, leadership and beauty, in which everything depends on machines and cybernetics, makes people much more animalistic than spiritual, prone to caring only about what affects them personally or their pockets, and to acting solely on the basis of their attachments and feelings.

The idea of sacrifice seems to have been banished from the mind of modern man.

Each one of us, as well, living in this age of atheism in which God is forgotten, may be easily led to be much more interested in concrete things, rather than the consideration of the more elevated perspectives of the supernatural world.

If we are not careful, we go to Mass and attend the Liturgy as a brute would watch a spectator event, when in reality, the divine and august moment of the Holy Sacrifice is that which is most important and excellent, and is the true apex of our day.

A treasure of graces at our disposal

The minds of all Angels and all men are incapable of comprehending the greatness of the Sacrifice of Calvary, which was established two thousand years ago for the first time and is renewed every day, in a bloodless manner, across the world.

So, to not take advantage of this treasure of graces that the Redeemer has won is a fault by omission!

All of us who are Christians have a share, through Baptism, in the priesthood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we attend the Eucharistic Celebration, it is a good custom to unite ourselves to the mystery that will take place and, at the moment when the priest prepares the offerings and elevates the host and the chalice to be consecrated, to offer to God the Father, through Jesus Himself and through the intercession of Mary Most Holy and our Guardian Angel, the Most Precious Blood of His Son, soliciting the benefits of this sacrifice for the good of the Church and souls, as well as for our personal salvation and perseverance, for our ideals and objectives, for the fulfillment of our mission and for our loved ones.

Everything that Our Lord bought by suffering on the Cross can be obtained with a single Mass! There is nothing that cannot be achieved with it, provided that the intentions are good.

We must remember this truth several times during the day, from the moment we wake up in the morning until the moment we close our eyes to sleep at night, praying that even the beating of our hearts, our inhaling and exhaling, the blood that circulates through our veins and the cells that are

renewed, in short, everything that occurs in our organism, may be in union with this generous sacrifice, whose effects are infinite.

Sacrifice and priesthood in pagan religions and in Israel

Together with this important reality of sacrifice – which springs from the natural law existing in every human being and was common even among the peoples of antiquity, including in the most barbaric religions – we encounter the fundamental figure of the priest, for sacrifice and priesthood are correlative.

In the Encyclical *Ad catholici sacerdotii*, Pope Pius XI writes, in sober but very elevated and literary language:

“In fact, priests are to be found among all peoples whose customs are known, [...] They may, indeed, be in the service of false divinities; but wherever religion is professed, wherever altars are built, there also is a priesthood surrounded by particular marks of honour and veneration.”¹

In the Old Testament, when the Israelites left Egypt after four hundred and thirty years of slavery, the institution of the Levitical priesthood was born at the very origin of the Hebrew religion, established by Moses according to divine guidance.

God, who created man with body and soul, knows that principles and

doctrine alone are not enough to move him. What really compels him is example, which, affecting his tendencies, favours the practice of the Law.

Therefore, in addition to the prophet who warned and showed the way, and to whom the Commandments were given, written on stone tablets, there had to be a priest to represent the people before the Lord and to represent the Lord before the people, interceding and offering sacrifices with the extraordinary power of intercession guaranteed by God Himself, so as to obtain help and strength to observe the Law.

And we see that, in order to give the Israelites a clear notion of the greatness of the priesthood, God commanded Moses to constituting Aaron as priest, adorning him and clothing him with highly symbolic insignia, which easily recalled his image as intercessor.

When he sacrificed animals – lambs, goats, pigeons, or oxen – offering them to God in atonement, and then collected the blood in a recipient and sprinkled it on the assembly with a hyssop branch, the gesture signified to this people of coarse customs that the offerings made by the priest opened God's heart to bless them and to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

Thus, all this symbolism was to prepare souls for the appearance of the High Priest.

And those victims, sacrificed for centuries, accustomed them to understand the One who was to come, who would be the Victim *par excellence*, and whose redeeming Blood would buy the salvation of all.

Priest, Mediator, and Victim

In natural religions, society chose some of its members to offer sacrifices to appease the “deities”. But from the moment God deigned to found His Church, He Himself established the order of its priesthood and chose its Priest.

When the government of a state needs an ambassador in another country, it chooses someone from its own

nation for this task, because a foreigner, who does not have native blood, cannot represent the homeland.

In the same way, since it is the priest's office to be a mediator between God and men,² he must necessarily belong to the human race, because it would not be fitting for an Angel to exercise the priestly function.

For the same reason, the title of Priest is not attributed to the Father or the Holy Spirit, but to the Incarnate Word, begotten by the Father from all eternity and sent by Him to earth.

In fact, as God, the Son could not offer a sacrifice to the Father, since both are equal, as St. Thomas Aquinas³ explains. But by coming down from Heaven and taking on human nature, He became the perfect Mediator, entirely capable of being the Pontiff *par excellence*, since, as both Man and God, there is no one superior to Him!

If in the Old Testament the priest had to offer burnt offerings and expiatory sacrifices both for the sins of the people and for his own faults, Our Lord Jesus Christ brought this occurrence to perfection by offering Himself as a Victim of infinite value, who honours His Father permanently and atones for the sins of all humanity.

Christ became, both in Heaven and on earth, the true Lamb of God, sacrificed for the salvation of men.

As St. Thomas⁴ demonstrates, it is for this reason that the Father rejected the burnt offerings of the Old Law, for to perform the pre-figurative rites in the presence of the one perfect, pure and spotless Sacrifice was no longer relevant.

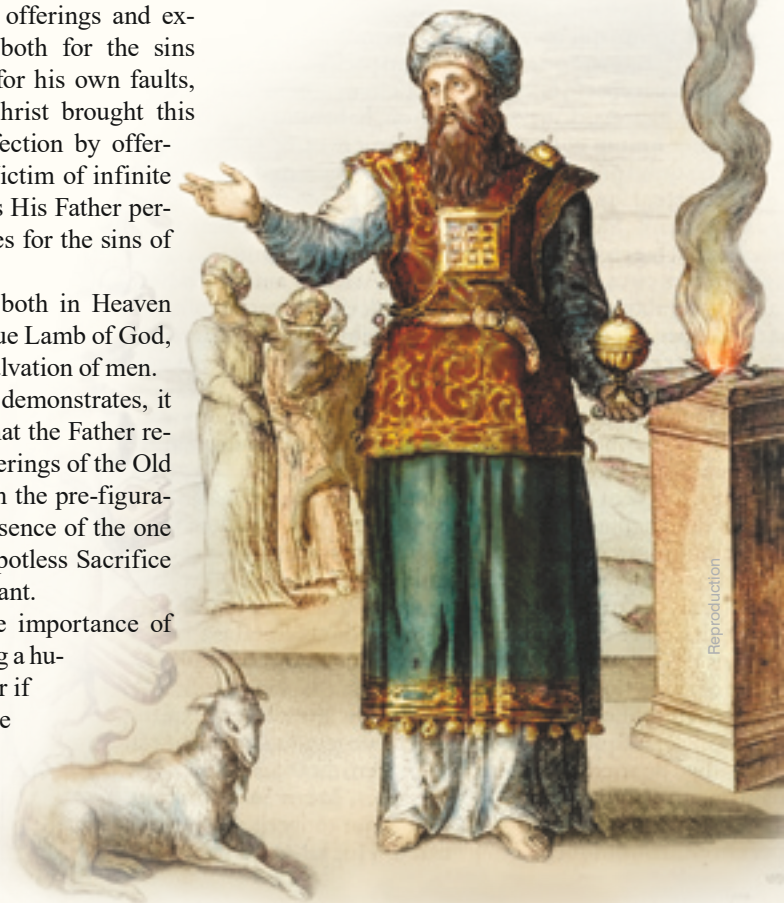
Here we see the importance of Our Lord not having a human personality, for if He did, it would be a mere man who would die and not God, and therefore Redemption would not take

place, since His humanity, strictly speaking, could not atone for the offences committed against the Creator.

However, by the grace of union, Christ's human nature is worthy of adoration and, as a result, any action of His, however small, has infinite value and would have been enough to free

The symbology of the Mosaic priesthood helped to prepare souls for the appearance of the High Priest and Victim par excellence

The sacrifice of the Old Law



the whole world from the state of damnation resulting from sin.

The Saviour conceived something so great that it is beyond any angelic or human conception: He became incarnate to die on the Cross and redeem us, when a simple gesture, a tear or a smile from Him would have been enough to bring about Redemption, wipe away the stain of sin and even to pardon us the punishment we deserved! How much more, then, did Our Lord do for us by giving all His divine Blood!

Mary's dignity, superior to the priesthood

Now, from what moment on did Jesus Christ become the Priest and the Mediator?

From the moment Our Lady said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38) and an extraordinary miracle took place: the Holy Spirit covered her and, by the work of this same Spirit, the process of gestation of the Son of God began. That is, when she conceived and the Soul of Our Lord was infused into her womb, Jesus was anointed Priest with the holy "oil of gladness" (Ps 45:7), offering in advance the Sacrifice of His own life. And that is why He is called the Christ.

Therefore, by giving her "*Fiat*" in the mystery of the Annunciation, Our Lady co-operated in a certain way in this anointing,⁵ through which the history of the Redemption of the human race began. There, hidden in Mary's virginal womb and sanctifying His own Mother even more, Jesus made His first priestly prayer, as intercessor before God for men.

We see, then, the great relationship that exists between Our Lady and priests, for, be-

ing the Mother of the High, True and Only Priest, She is also the Mother

of all others who are linked to Jesus Christ for all eternity.

However, it is important to remember that, through her Divine Motherhood, Mary is inserted in a relative way into the hypostatic order – which is the union of human nature with divine nature – and therefore stands above the plane of grace to which the seven Sacraments belong, including that of Holy Orders.⁶

Therefore, Mary's dignity as Mother of God is incomparably superior to that of the priest. She never received the Sacrament of Holy Orders – reserved by the Divine Master for men – but was associated by Christ with the work of salvation. Our Lady has an intrinsic part in the redemptive sacrifice, while the priest is limited to reproducing it in an extrinsic and purely instrumental way when celebrating Holy Mass.⁷

The consummation of the sacrifice took place at the Resurrection

Our Lord was therefore a Priest from the moment of His conception and, above all, at the moment He was born. Later, when He was presented in the Temple to fulfil the Law, when He returned there at the age of twelve to debate with the doctors, and when He began His public life, He was constantly serving as an intermediary between the people and God. Knowing human weakness, "except for sin" (Heb 4:15), in Himself, Jesus had compassion on those who, recognizing their own weakness, sought His intercession with the Father. There was not a single person who approached Him asking for forgiveness whom He did not grant it, or even take the initiative to offer it to them without their having asked for it.

When the time of His Passion came, He allowed Himself to be arrested and bound,

*Jesus took flesh to
die on the Cross
and redeem us; His
priesthood began with
His conception and
was consummated in
His Passion, Death
and Resurrection*



"The crucified Christ between the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist", by Lorenzo Monaco - Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

scourged, crowned with thorns, buffeted, spat upon and spurned in favour of Barabas. Finally, He accepted to carry the Cross and be crucified, to die and be buried... But on the third day, He resurrected Himself!

In the Old Law, when animals were sacrificed as an offering to the Lord, part of the victim had to be consumed by the priest and the other part given to the one offering it, to be eaten by him and his family. God had established this to show His acceptance of the feast offered and to make the people participate in it.

However, in the case of a sacrifice of atonement, it was necessary to burn the offering, for reparation required consumption by fire.

Now, since the sacrifice of Our Lord was an atonement, it would seem necessary that His Body should deteriorate according to the normal laws of fallen nature... But we know that this did not occur. His Death took place by the separation of His Body and Soul, but both remained united to the divinity, by the grace of union, and there was no destruction.

Thus, the consummation of the redemptive sacrifice took place at the



Msgr. João in December of 2007

It is because of this Mediator and the His perfect oblation that the Father showers us with blessings and with all the graces that Jesus has in Himself

moment of the Resurrection, because then everything that was subject to suffering and death disappeared from the Body of Christ; He left on earth what pertains to it, to assume the glory that is of Heaven, in accordance with His Soul, which had been in the beatific vision from the first instant of the Incarnation. Jesus had denied His Body this glory in order to suffer crucifixion.

Having risen, He ascended into Heaven and opened the doors of eternal beatitude for us. Now seated at the right hand of the Father, He continues, as High Priest, to intercede for men and to present our sacrifices and prayers.

It is because of this Mediator, and the perfect oblation He made, that the Father showers us with blessings and distributes to us all the graces that Jesus has in Himself as a treasure.

God cannot desire evil for us; on the contrary, He only desires our good! So it suffices to not place obstacles for Him to lead us to the highest perfection! ✠

Excerpts from oral expositions given between 1992 and 2010

¹ PIUS XI. *Ad catholici sacerdotii*, n.8.

² Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. III, q.22, a.1.

³ Cf. Idem, q.26, a.2.

⁴ Cf. Idem, I-II, q.103, a.3.

⁵ On this point, Alastruey expresses himself as follows: "Mary, by her free consent, cooperated in the institution or priestly consecration of Christ [...].

She gave the subject of the consecration, conceived in herself, and offered the place or temple where it should take place: her virginal womb, as a sanctuary consecrated especially for this purpose. Grimal, in this regard, states: 'The Incarnation is nothing other than the ineffable ordination of Jesus'" (ALASTRUEY, Gregorio. *Tratado de la Virgen Santísima*. 4.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1956, p.612).

⁶ In this regard, the Dominican Merkelbach states: "Surpassing sanctifying grace and glory, Divine Motherhood necessarily surpasses the other graces, that is, *gratis datæ* graces and other dignities, in particular the priesthood itself" (MERKELBACH, OP, Benito Enrique. *Mariología*. Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 1954, p.107).

⁷ "Mary had her own unique participation in the Sacrifice of the Cross, as befitted the Mother of God [...]; and therefore, She cannot be denied a participation in such priestly power that places her under the supreme priesthood of Christ and above the ministerial and hierarchical priesthood" (ALASTRUEY, op. cit., p.617).

The Sacred Liturgy

Embodying the Highest Aspirations of Humanity

An unequivocal and objective path, indicated by Christ Himself and established by the Church, the Liturgy enables our encounter with God at every celebration.

✠ João Paulo Bueno



Stephen Nami

“Grant, O merciful God, that, just as the Saviour of the world, born *this day*, is the author of divine generation for us, so He may be the giver even of immortality,”¹ prays the priest at Christmas Mass.

However, what is the basis of the bold affirmation in this prayer, that *today*, more than two thousand years after Christ came into the world, He is born for us?

In its prayers, is the Church employing a linguistic style permeated with beauty but devoid of truth, as faithless scholars sometimes presume? Or perhaps this would be a form of persuasion, urging its believers to revive in their memory facts as ancient as they are important to them, as certain pious persons lacking theological formation conjecture?

The problem arises, and solving it solely based on “faith” seems a truly simplistic and superficial solution. Indeed, sometimes we prefer to say *we believe* simply so as not to have to explain *why we believe*, leaving the reason for our faith dubious, until we realize the incoherence this implies.

So, why do we believe that Christ was born for us *today*? The answer to this question perhaps finds no occa-

sion more propitious for clarification than at Christmas.

It is worth noting, firstly, that Christmas time, in a certain sense even more so than Easter, is laden with elements that impress the senses, fascinating us and creating a palpable atmosphere of innocence quite unmatched throughout the rest of the year.

Scintillating Christmas celebrations

Who does not have nostalgia of watching, as a child, the Christmas tree being set up and laden with charming decorations, which the twinkling lights made appear almost precious to those who admired them? Or, even more so, the preparations for the most important family gathering of the year, a lavish dinner in which the dishes, goblets, and even the apparel seemed to take on new beauty?

As children, who among us did not harbour an inner curiosity to know more about the august Midnight Mass, that celebration we dressed up for, without quite understanding why we were going to attend it?

But all of this was merely preparation; entering the church was breath-taking. Even the church seemed more imbued with life: its walls seemed

permeated with light; the people were more amiable and communicative; the choir rejoiced in singing accompanied by musical instruments once more; the altar, adorned with abundant flower arrangements, exuded pristineness and decorum; the vestments of the celebrant and garb of the altar servers emphasized the solemnity of the ceremony.

In addition to the delights for the sense of sight, already so gratified, the sense of hearing was also regaled: the bells began to toll. And, beyond this interior bliss – incomprehensible to those who prefer the concupiscence of the flesh – was added the fine scent of rare incense, for its precious aroma reaffirmed the importance of the occasion.

Were it not that the words of the ceremony signify something essentially more important, toward which all these external elements were ordered, our senses would already have been satisfied; however, they would find their true fulfillment only when the palate delighted in the food suited to every taste (cf. Wis 16:20), the Eucharist.

It is Christmas, and the Church proves itself to be the only one capable of bestowing joys that surpass any fleeting pleasure, touching not only our ex-

ternal and internal senses, but the very depths of our souls. To this end, it uses the Liturgy, an effective means desired by Christ Himself to make present to humanity the same graces and blessings bestowed on the most significant occasions of His passage through this world, with a view to Redemption.

In order to evoke this supernatural atmosphere, we call to mind firstly some aspects of Christmas celebrations, by way of example, so that we may better understand the place that the Liturgy holds within the Church and what its study comprises in the ambit of Theology.

An objective and unequivocal path to God

The Liturgy is the set of elements and practices of Christian worship.² Its existence is explained by man's need to render to God the praise and adoration that are due to Him, rendering Him a service related to the virtue of religion.³

Through this virtue, man gives due honour to God⁴ or, in other words, strives to settle his debt to the Creator.⁵ Cicero⁶, in his turn, indicted something in this regard when he noted the close relationship between religion and worship.

It is, therefore, through religion that we *reconnect* with the only and almighty God, according to the view of St. Augustine.⁷ Now, simply because this virtue commands us to regard the Lord not as an *object* but as an *end*, in the manner of an external manifestation,⁸ it becomes necessary to worship with tangible elements, through which the intimate connection between our body and our soul is addressed.

From the above, we understand how worship must unite both external and internal elements; in truth, human acts proceed from within man, and the full consummation of our offering to God, through the Liturgy, takes place in the combination of our sincerity of heart with external practices.

In short, the Liturgy is nothing more than an objective and unequivocal path, traced by Christ Himself and established by the Church, for man to walk towards God.

Mirror of divine action among men

It is in this sense, moreover, that the Liturgy can be understood as a theological place,⁹ providing reliable and trustworthy information for the understanding of Dogmatic Theology itself, notably through its prayers – *lex supplicandi* – since they express the meaning of our Faith and what we believe – *lex credendi*.¹⁰

Thus, it is understandable why the Church has progressively, organically and judiciously forged everything concerning its worship, so that the theologic-

al reality expressed by the words of the liturgical texts could also be believed through the gestures proper to the rite and the environment in which it takes place.

By way of examples, the conversion processes – more frequently than we imagine – of men of erudition, eminent for their intellectual brilliance, such as Joris Karl Huysmans or André Frossard, who through the blessings of the Liturgy and the irresistible attraction of *pulchrum* began to return to or enter the Church, seem to suffice.

In this light, we understand Benedict XVI's bold statement: "Beauty, then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God Himself and His revelation. These considerations should make us realize the



Stephen Nami

The Liturgy is the ensemble of elements and practices of Christian worship by which we give God the praise that is due to Him; through its tangible aspects, the intimate connection between our body and soul is fully satisfied.

Christmas Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil), in 2024



Through the Liturgy, at Christmas we receive the same graces that were poured out upon humanity when the Infant Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

The Child Jesus - Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

care which is needed, if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendour.”¹¹

In other words, the Liturgy is, metaphorically speaking, a mirror of divine action among men. In the field of Theol-

ogy, it stands as the highest example of God’s manifestation, real and perceptible by the senses, whether through its essential beauty or through the truth expressed in the words of liturgical action, through which the mysteries of that same God being celebrated are actualized.

The means by which the mysteries of Redemption are actualized

Therefore, if we believe that Christ was born for us *today*, it is because we are convinced that He came into the world in a grotto in Bethlehem more than two thousand years ago, as the starting point of our Redemption, the mystery of which was operated then and is renewed now and, more precisely, *actualized* by the Church through the Liturgy.

So between that birth and the one we are now celebrating, there is only one difference: time. The graces can be received in the same way that the shepherds or the Magi received them, as long as our inner dispositions are the same as theirs, in the sense of loving,

praising and adoring the Child so fragile, yet creator, born of the Virgin Mary on Christmas night.

Indeed, the Church pleads in the Christmas Vigil Mass: “O God, who gladden us *year by year* as we wait in hope for our redemption, grant that, just as we joyfully welcome your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer, we may also merit to face Him confidently when He comes again as our Judge.”¹²

Thus, through the Liturgy, Christ not only unites Heaven and earth, but He also becomes incarnate sacramentally under the Eucharistic Species, enabling us to encounter Him on the altar, requiring neither a journey as arduous as that of the Magi, nor the announcement by Angels, as was made to the shepherds so that they might go and worship the Newborn lying in the manger (cf. Lk 2:16). He asks of us only the conviction in the power of His Church, the only one capable of bringing the Redeemer to the world every Christmas: “Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born for us.”¹³

The highest aspirations of humanity are, therefore, embodied in the Liturgy! ✠

¹ THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD. Mass during the Day. Prayer after Communion. In: THE ROMAN MISSAL. English translation according to the Third Typical Edition approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and confirmed by the Apostolic See. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011, p.175.

² The list of elements that are part of the Liturgy is vast. Let us mention just a few: liturgical books, the chalice, the ciborium, the tabernacle, the thurible, incense, vessels and linens, the cross, candlesticks, the altar, and the ambo. The practices may be simply related to worship, or related to the specific celebration of a Sacrament or the distribution of a sacramental.

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.186, a.1. The term λειτουργία, which conveys the concept of a service directed towards the good of the community, came to refer specifically to the service constituted by the worship of God. Therefore, its meaning has always been rooted in the general benefit and not merely in the benefit of the individual. It is in this context that even the “small” acts performed by the Liturgy are understood to have a public and universal identity in the Church, as they concern the integral worship of God and not merely a private ceremony.

⁴ Cf. Idem, q.81, a.2.

⁵ Cf. LABOURDETTE, OP, Marie-Michel. *La religion*. Paris: Parole et Silence, 2018, p.34.

⁶ Cf. CICERO, Marcus Tullius. *De natura deorum*. L.II, n.5-6.

⁷ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *De civitate Dei*. L.X, c.3, n.2; *De vera religione*, c.LV, n.113.

⁸ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., q.94, a.1, ad 1.

⁹ It is worth emphasizing that the Liturgy is essentially the celebration of the mysteries of our Faith, expressed in the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whereas Theology is the rational deepening of these same mysteries. However, the Liturgy will be a *locus theologicus* to the extent that it is grounded in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, reaffirmed by the Magisterium.

¹⁰ Here we intend to employ the axiom coined by Prosper of Aquitaine: “*Ut legem credendi*

lex statuat supplicandi – So that the norm of prayer establishes the rule of belief” (*De gratia Dei et libero voluntatis arbitrio*, c.VIII: PL 51, 209), understood according to the Augustinian perspective of assuming the prayer of the Church, expressed through the Liturgy, as a criterion of Faith.

¹¹ BENEDICT XVI. *Sacramentum caritatis*, n.35.

¹² THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD. Vigil Mass. Collect. In: THE ROMAN MISSAL, op. cit., p.171.

¹³ THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD. Mass at Dawn. Entrance Antiphon. In: THE ROMAN MISSAL, op. cit., p.174.



Jesus Christ Alive on Earth

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§1120. The saving mission entrusted by the Father to His incarnate Son was committed to the Apostles and through them to their successors: they receive the Spirit of Jesus to act in His name and in His Person. The ordained minister is the sacramental bond that ties the liturgical action to what the Apostles said and did and, through them, to the words and actions of Christ, the source and foundation of the Sacraments.

“All the churches on the face of the earth might be destroyed, but wherever there is still a priest, we can still have the Mass, we can still have the Holy Eucharist.” If this statement surprises us with its depth and beauty, our surprise only increases when we discover who uttered it and, above all, the motives behind his words.

It is a phrase of Cardinal Van Thuan, who spent thirteen years locked up in the appalling prisons of communist Vietnam. Who can imagine the profound emotion he must have experienced as he celebrated Holy Mass clandestinely behind bars? As a priest of the Most High God and prince of the Holy Church, he knew that, although a prisoner, he possessed a power not granted the Angels: when he pronounced the

Consecration, Our Lord Jesus Christ became present in his cell, just as long ago, in the Grotto of Bethlehem.

“What angelic or human language could explain such unlimited power? Who could imagine that the word of a man [...] would receive from grace the prodigious power to bring the Son of God down from Heaven to earth?”²

The Vietnamese cardinal was keenly aware that “the ordained minister is the sacramental bond that ties the liturgical action to what the Apostles said and, through them, to the words and actions of Christ,” and that, as a successor of the Apostles, he thus acted in the name of Jesus and in His Person.

In fact, when sacred ministers baptize, when they hear the faithful in Confession or celebrate Holy Mass, it is literally the God-Man Himself who acts in them!

For this reason, their responsibility to conform their lives to that of Our Lord is tremendous! St. John of Avila³ calls priests reliquaries of God, houses of God and, in a way, creators of God. St. John Eudes, in his turn, affirms

that “the priest is Jesus Christ alive and walking on earth.”⁴

But, as we consider the sublimity of the priesthood, we should also ponder how much admiration and respect the faithful owe to the ministers of the Lord. If we were given to see what occurs mystically when the priest administers the Sacraments, and if we consider the august mystery of the Liturgy more deeply, we would leave each celebration with our souls “rejuvenated” by the experience of those contacts with God Himself!

Contemplating such a wondrous and divine presence of Our Lord, we can perhaps better understand the phrase that once flowed from His divine lips: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). ✠

¹ VAN THUAN, Francis Xavier Nguyen. *The Road of Hope. A Gospel from Prison*. North Palm Beach: Wellspring, 2018, p.104.

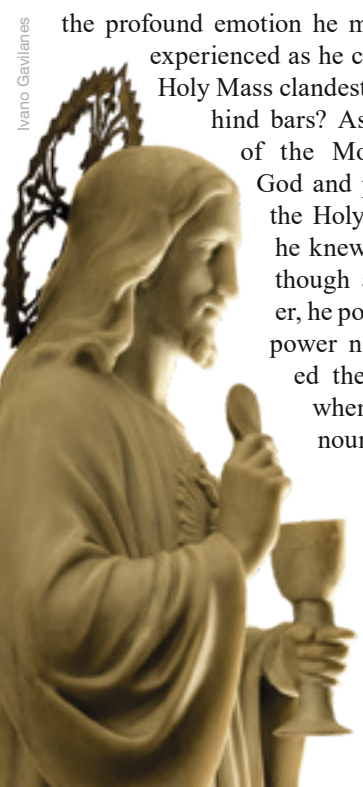
² ST. LEONARD OF PORT MAURICE. *Excellências da Santa Missa*. São Paulo: Cultor de Livros, 2015, p.21.

³ Cf. ST. JOHN OF AVILA. Plática enviada al P. Francisco Gómez, S. J., para ser predicada en un sínodo diocesano de Córdoba, 1563. In: *Obras Completas*. Madrid: BAC, 1953, t.II, p.1289.

⁴ ST. JOHN EUDES. Le mémorial de la vie ecclésiastique. In: *Œuvres Complètes*. Vanes: Lafolye Frères, 1906, t.III, p.187.

When the sacred ministers administer the Sacraments or celebrate Holy Mass, it is literally Jesus Himself who does it

Sacred Heart of Jesus - House of the Heralds, Medellín (Colombia)



Ivano Gavilanes



The Sacrament of Mary

If the Church and the Eucharist are an indivisible reality, the same must be said of Mary and the Eucharist.



✠ Sr. Ana Laura Bueno

What if someone were to claim that the Eucharist is not only a perpetuation of the Incarnation, but also an extension of Our Lady's action on earth? That would be rather bold, would it not?

At first glance, the statement does indeed seem to audaciously approach the borderlines of orthodoxy... However, *audacity* and *heresy* are not synonymous.

In fact, this idea, defended by a Servant of God¹ in the 20th century, was upheld and explicated by the Magisterium of the Church in the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: “In the ‘memorial’ of Calvary [the Holy Mass] all that Christ accomplished by His passion and His death is present. Consequently all that Christ did with regard to His Mother for our sake is also present. To her He gave the beloved disciple and, in him, each of us: ‘Behold, your Son!’ To each of us He also says: ‘Behold your Mother!’ (cf. Jn 19:26-27). Experiencing the memorial of Christ’s death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift. It means accepting – like John – the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves in the school of His Mother and allowing her to accompany us. Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the

Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist.”²

This well-founded proposition gives rise to beautiful and fruitful meditations on the union between Our Lady and her Divine Son in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Guardian of Jesus’ royal table

As Catholic piety has discerned over the centuries, there are several analogies between the Incarnation and Transubstantiation. If it was through the consent and word of a Virgin that the Divine Word became Man, it is also through another human word, that of the priest, that a second Incarnation is renewed for us daily on all altars; just as it was five words that drew God into the world for the first time – “*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*” (Lk 1:38) – it is also five words spoken

by the priest – “*Hoc est enim corpus meum*” – that bring Him back to earth.

Moreover, if in little Nazareth the Saviour hid Himself in the most pure womb of His Mother, once again He conceals Himself under the Eucharistic Species on the altars. In this sense, Our Lady anticipated the Eucharistic faith of the Church by offering her virginal womb for the Incarnation of the Word of God.³

The divine link between Mary and the Sacrament of the Altar was prophesied even in the Song of Songs: “*Posuerunt me custodem in vineis* – They made me keeper of the vineyards” (Sg 1:6), meaning that the Virgin was made guardian, organizer and protector of the royal table of Jesus.⁴ Undeniably inspired by grace, although initially misconstrued and even persecuted, the proclamation made by St. Peter Julian Eymard in 1868, when he gave her the title of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, appears in this context.

A “relic” of Mary

There were also authors who claimed that the Eucharist was a “relic” of Mary. In fact, we call relics the remains of the bodies of the saints, something that belonged to them or that came into contact with them. When we consider the union between mother and son, we see that the latter has a physical body formed by

She who offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of the Word of God was made the guardian, organizer and protector of the royal table of Jesus

the mother, with her own blood, as a product of her substance. It is undeniable that he ends up becoming a kind of “relic” of the one who gave birth to him.⁵

And the veracity of this thought is made sublime when applied to the exalted union between Mary and Jesus. As theology teaches, Our Lady, through her Divine Maternity, was honoured with affinity and consanguinity⁶ with God, in addition to being the only one who cooperated physically in the constitution of the Sacred Body of her Son – *caro Christi, caro Mariae*.

Now, if the Eucharist contains the real and physical presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ veiled under the Sacred Species, it can be considered, in this sense, a “relic” of His virginal Mother.

This is a most original idea, which invites the soul to redoubled Eucharistic devotion.

From her “fiat”, Redemption and the Holy Mass

If, therefore, it was with a view to Redemption that the Incarnation took place, it is through the Eucharistic Celebration that both are renewed on the altar. In fact, Providence saw fit to make the fulfillment of its most exalted designs depend on the “yes” of a Maiden, since “if Mary had not pronounced her ‘fiat’, the Church would have neither Christ, nor the priesthood, nor the sacrifice, nor the Sacrament.”⁷ She alone gave the world the one Priest, of whom the others are just ministers: the Incarnate Word who becomes present on the altar.⁸

Thus, intimately associated with the work of Redemption, Our Lady grants the Liturgy the pinnacle of its splendour and one of the main foundations of its institution: the ineffable communion of man with God in the Holy Mass. Not without reason, then, can Mary’s sublime and mysterious



Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament - Notre-Dame Basilica, Montreal (Canada)

Gustavo Krahl

Mary alone gave the world the one Priest, of whom the others are but ministers: the Incarnate Word who becomes present on the altar

presence be contemplated in various aspects of the Church’s ceremonies.

Symbols of invisible realities, some liturgical objects used by the Church for sacred functions represent the august mission of the Mother of God alongside

her Son. For example, She is compared by Christian tradition to “an altar of pure gold on which the Great Victim offered Himself.”⁹ The crucifix also reminds us of her: Our Lady was like the first cross on which the God-Man lay for the sacrifice. One can even see her as the mystical candelabra that brought the true Light, Jesus Christ, into the world. And the vestments worn by the priest represent the sacerdotal raiment of the Saviour: His most holy humanity, received from Mary.¹⁰

The presence of the Virgin is also manifest in the contemplation of certain parts of the Holy Mass. When kissing the altar and addressing the faithful, pronouncing the “*Dominus vobiscum*”, the priest repeats the angelic greeting: “*Dominus tecum*” (Lk 1:28). Then, when reciting the *Confiteor*, the minister bows his head before the holiest in Heaven and on earth, invoking the name of Mary, Refuge and Advocate of sinners. During the Offertory, as the faithful silently place their intentions on the altar, they remember the secret offering that the Redeemer made of Himself in the most pure womb of His Mother. And, as he adds a drop of water to the chalice as a symbol of the union between the divine and human natures, the celebrant remembers the one through whom this mystery was accomplished.¹¹

Mass with Mary

When narrating to his spiritual children, at a conference, the graces he had received during a Mass celebrated at the motherhouse of the Heralds of the Gospel, Msgr. João¹² indicated to them a simple and effective way to draw closer to the Blessed Virgin and to participate fruitfully in the Eucharist.

As he celebrated in front of an expressive image of the Mother of Good Counsel, he rejoiced at being in her presence, and that of her Divine Son, which led to a filial interior dialogue with both of them.



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Mother of Good Counsel Chapel - Motherhouse of the Heralds of the Gospel, São Paulo

When he said “*sursum corda* – lift up your hearts,” for example, he applied the exhortation to Mary, imagining what her response would be: “But, my son, it is impossible to lift it higher...” Thus, he perceived the Holy

Sacrifice as a true encounter with Our Lady, who introduced him, in an indescribable way, into an encounter with God Himself.

This is a very accessible solution for those who wonder how to attend

To attend Mass well, simply seek the presence of Mary, Mother and nourisher of the Bread of Life, in every movement of the liturgical ceremony

Mass well: simply seek the presence of Mary Most Holy, Mother and Nourisher of the Bread of Life,¹³ in every movement of the liturgical ceremony, in each song and in every word. For her Heart is a thurible of Eucharistic love, whose pulsations unite with the adoration of the faithful as a sweet-smelling incense rising to Heaven.

To conclude, as Dr. Plinio recommended,¹⁴ let us desire not only to rest our heads on the Immaculate Heart of our Heavenly Mother, as St. John the Evangelist once did on the Lord’s, but also to establish our dwelling there, so that, listening to the beating of her Heart, we may live of these secrets of love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. ✚

¹ Cf. DE LOMBAERDE, DNSS, Julio Maria. *Maria e a Eucaristia. Estudo doutrinal de um título e uma doutrina: Nossa Senhora do Santíssimo Sacramento*. Manhumirim: O Luta-dor, 1937, p.13. Fr. Julio Maria was born in Waereghen, Belgium, on January 8, 1878. Sensing a call to the priesthood, he entered the Congregation of the Holy Family, founded by Fr. Berthir to receive late vocations. He was ordained on January 13, 1908 and, in 1912, sent to the Brazilian Amazon, where he worked for fifteen years as a missionary. In Macapá, he founded the Congregation of the Sisters of the Im-

maculate Heart of Mary, approved by Pope Benedict XV. In 1928, he moved to Minas Gerais, where he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, as well as that of the Sacramentine Sisters of Our Lady. He wrote dozens of doctrinal, apologetic, and spiritual works. He died on December 24, 1944.

² ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n.57.

³ Cf. Idem, n.55.

⁴ Cf. LÉMANN, Joseph. *La Mère des chrétiens et la Reine de l’Église*. 2.ed. Paris: Victor Le-coffre, 1900, p.267.

⁵ Cf. LOMBAERDE, op. cit., p.221-223.

⁶ Cf. MERKELBACH, OP, Benito Enrique. *Mariología*. Bilbao: Desclee de Brouwer, 1954, p.91-92.

⁷ PHILIPON, OP, Marie-Michel. *Los sacramentos en la vida cristiana*. 2.ed. Madrid: Palabra, 1979, p.334.

⁸ Cf. Idem, ibidem.

⁹ VAN DEN BERGHE, Oswald. *Marie et le sacerdoce*. Bruxelles-Paris: Haenen; Laroche, 1872, p.126.

¹⁰ Cf. LHOUMEAU, SMM, Antonin. *La vie spirituelle à l’école de Saint Louis-Marie*

Grignon de Montfort. Bruges: Beyaert, 1954, p.442-443.

¹¹ Cf. Idem, p.444-447.

¹² Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 28/5/2008.

¹³ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *Sermo CLXXXIV*, n.3. In: *Obras Completas*. 2.ed. Madrid: BAC, 2005, v.XXIV, p.6.

¹⁴ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Coração de Maria, nossa esperança* [Heart of Mary, our Hope]! In: *Legionário*. São Paulo. Year XVI. No.555 (March 28, 1943), p.3.



Why Are Liturgical Vestments Used?

On the cold night of Christmas, Our Lady wrapped the Child Jesus in swaddling clothes with maternal tenderness. Similarly, over the centuries, Holy Mother Church has strived to clothe her sons and ministers who serve at the altar of the Lord with dignity.

However, could mere aesthetics be the only reason for using vestments in the Liturgy?

Aware of the contingency of human nature, which reaches supernatural realities through the senses (cf. *Summa Theologiæ*, III, q. 60, a. 4), the Church chose certain vestments for her priests so that, because of them, they might become deeply convinced of the greatness of their ministry. And St. Thomas offers us several examples in this regard (cf. Suppl., q.40, a.7).

To represent the fortitude necessary for the performance of liturgical functions, a rectangular linen cloth, the amice, covers the shoulders and neck of the cleric, much as a helmet covers the head. The alb, a long white garment, extends from the shoulders to the ankles: this symbolizes priestly purity. The cincture, a sturdy cord with tassels at the ends, fastens the alb at the waist, expressing the discipline of the flesh.

While priests have full authority in administering the Sacraments, that of deacons is participatory. This reality is demonstrated by the stole, a long sash of the same colour as the chasuble,

worn differently by both ministers: the former wear the stole over both shoulders, while the latter wear it only over the left shoulder.

The dalmatic – a wide, fastened garment worn by deacons – indicates the generosity with which they should dispense the Sacraments, but always in a spirit of service, which is why it is secured on both sides. The priest, in turn, wears the chasuble, a sign of charity, as he consecrates the Eucharist, the sacrament of love.

But the symbolism of the vestments reaches its apex in the one who possesses the fullness of the priesthood: the Bishop. The mitre refers to the knowledge of both Testaments, evidenced by its two points. The crosier,

similar to a staff, represents pastoral zeal: the curvature at the top indicates the role of gathering those who have strayed, the shaft demonstrates support for the most fragile, and its tip recalls the incentive that should be given to the sluggish.

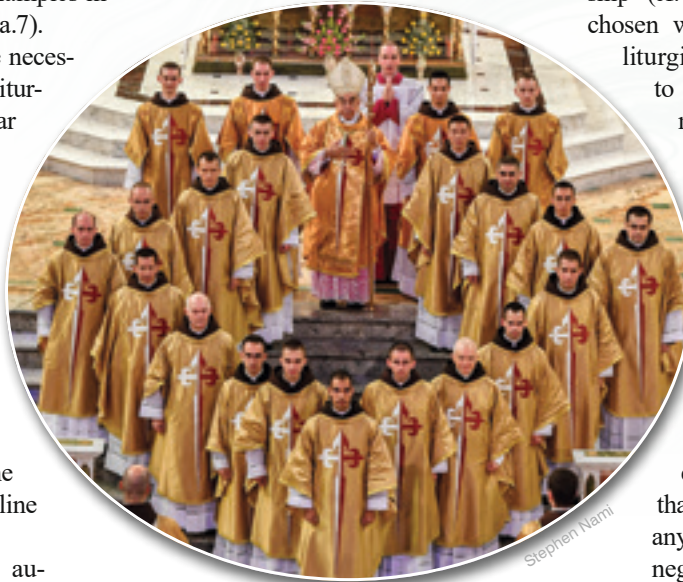
In view of such distinction, we might ask ourselves: is it necessary for these sacred ornaments, already so significant, to be also precious? Does this not contradict the modesty proper to ministers of God?

In reality, the Angelic Doctor notes, the purpose of vestments is not the personal glory of the minister. Rather, they serve to separate him from the rest of the faithful, “to indicate the excellence of their office or of the Divine worship” (cf. II-II, q.169, a.1 ad 2). In short, chosen wisely by the Holy Church,

liturgical vestments are intended to designate the suitability that ministers must possess in order to properly celebrate the divine mysteries (cf. Suppl., q.40, a.7).

Thus, St. Thomas affirms (cf. II-II, q.129, a.1, ad 3), whoever despises the honour due to that which is worthy of honour, deserves censure.

Now, is there anything on earth more worthy of honour than the Eucharist? Indeed, if anyone, moved by any kind of negligence, were to approach the Sacred Banquet unworthily, he might well hear this grave rebuke from Our Lord: “Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?” (Mt 22:12). ❖



Stephen Nami

Liturgical vestments are intended to designate the dignity that ministers must possess in order to worthily celebrate the divine mysteries.

Ordination to the priesthood at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil) in 2019



Love for the “Unum” of the Holy Church

Even in his childhood, Dr. Plinio was able to discern, in the many aspects of the life of the Church that he was coming to know, the spirit that unified and gave life to the Mystical Bride of Christ.

✠ Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

During my childhood, I began to notice that there was a uniformity in the Catholic Church which gave me the following impression: it seemed to me that the people, customs, doctrine, Liturgy and prayers had, from the beginning, a single mentality.

I looked at the objects in the Shrine of the Heart of Jesus' and thought: “This is curious... There is something in this image and in that stained-glass window that makes them all similar to each other and they form a whole. There is more than just the beautiful glass, the beautiful mosaic and the beautiful music. There is a unity in this that also exists within me and that enchants me more than each individual thing, but I do not know what it is...”

I tried hard to formulate what this unity might be, but my child's mind was not able to do so...

Loving the “unum” of the Holy Church

And I noticed that it was not just a mentality, but the mentality par excellence. I realized that, strictly speaking, only the Church possesses a true mentality, and outside of it no one else has one.

It was a certain way of being, present in absolutely everything, even in the smallest details: in the opening words of a prayer in a Missal, in the ambo on which the Missal itself stood,

in the shape of the altar and the windows, in the manner of the priest, in the ringing of the bell, in the echo of footsteps inside the church, in the way the confessional was placed closer to here or closer to there, in the arrangement of the vases on the altars... I seemed to see a correlation between the shape of the holy water font and the spirit of a particular saint, or between an episode in the life of another saint and the colour of a particular stained-glass window... In short, everything imaginable was the expression of a whole mentality.

I then leafed through albums with photographs of churches, showing Catholic styles from other times and things from the life of the Church in other eras, including the period of the catacombs. And in everything, I noticed that same mentality present, expressing itself in a thousand ways, styles and forms. Nothing could be more different than a Roman catacomb and the *Sainte-Chapelle* in Paris, for example. However, the mentality was the same.

Thus, this set of symbols, doctrines, laws, customs, and concrete realities constituted an *unum* from which one had a complete view of the universe, considered in its centre and in its true meaning; which led people to think, want and feel to the full extent of their own dimension, for every soul possesses immense “vastitudes”, inhabit-

ed or uninhabited, dirty or clean, caves or chapels... And all these spaces found something to entertain themselves with in the Church, according to that *unum*, which was appropriately externalized, with varying intensities and with greater or lesser fullness of expressive force, but always authentic, throughout the centuries.

On the other hand, as São Paulo is a city of great immigration, receiving religious orders and congregations from many different countries, I sometimes attended very different churches. I realized then that the Church imbued the most varied nations with this mentality.

The charm of the “Italian stained-glass window”

One example was the majestic and severe manner, but deep down good-natured and with a certain grandiose relaxation – typical of Neptune in the midst of the waves – of certain very fat and very tall Italian priests, who celebrated Mass with the air of someone speaking to eternity who would then play with a *bambino*...

These were priests with slightly shabby cassocks and surplices that were not very well placed, whose stoles were somewhat worn, for reasons of economy, but possessing an indefinable “something” of Roman eternity and that intelligence with which Italians overlook details to remain

within the general lines of things or, sometimes, focus on a detail to express only a general line in it, and move on, which is part of the delights of *sparita* Rome...²

I would attend the Italian priest's Mass and I liked him, thinking: "Look how intelligent and subtle he is; how he softens a series of rules that, for my *Fräulein*,³ are 'axes of the universe'! And the universe does not tremble before all his vagueness. How beautiful human intelligence is when it flies over obstacles instead of facing them and, in a flap of its wings, overcomes the problem without paying attention to it, lands right on top of a solution and leaps to greater heights. I appreciate this Italian way! I like the Church when it passes through the 'Italian stained-glass window!' It delights me!"

Attending Mass at the German school

On Sundays, *Fräulein* Mathilde would often make me get up much earlier than usual to attend Holy Mass at a German nuns' school on Consel-

heiro Crispiniano Street, followed by a walking tour. I willingly obeyed, to please my mother and because I was enchanted by all things German.

The streets were still somewhat dark and the gas lamps had just been extinguished. The school was on high ground, and upon entering the garden, we climbed a very steep ramp, along which there were plaster figures in relief, painted with great ingenuity, representing the Passion of Our Lord. This seemed designed to compel visitors, upon arrival, to make the most of every minute by doing something useful.

Although not particularly beautiful, these figures were pious and always very clean, giving me the impression that every half hour a nun would pass by with a wet sponge and clean them with love. It was a "bath" of fresh colour that I received before entering the chapel, and there was something there that made me aware of the divine holiness of Our Lord Jesus Christ enduring the pains of the Passion.

The chapel was dimly lit, and the lamp of the Blessed Sacrament flickered. I had the impression that the statues were waking up and looking at me benevolently, saying, "Here is this son. Let us see what he wants." There was a nun playing the harmonium and a group of children younger than us, sons and daughters of members of the German, Austrian and Swiss colonies, all in order in straight rows and praying. The German priest who celebrated Mass was the opposite of the Italian: firm and hieratic, as if those children were uhlans⁴ whom he was commanding there.

Grace filled me with supernatural sensations, and I thought: "This is magnificent! Such order, such cleanliness. Everything here is right, without whims or hitches! If I could live in this environment, I would not want anything else! I feel perfect. God is here!"

A friendly Portuguese priest

We also attended the church of a Portuguese priest: he was completely



Photos: Colégio Santa Catarina

Contemplating the Catholic Church in her priests, doctrine and Liturgy, and in the most diverse customs and ambiances, Dr. Plinio discerned in them a unified mentality

Ramp leading to the chapel of the old St. Adalbert College - São Paulo



**“Above all this there is Someone, greater than everything!
The Church does not seem like an institution, but like a person
who communicates through a thousand aspects”**

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church - São Paulo;
inset, Dr. Plinio in 1985

Magazine archive

different! Kind, gentle and accessible to everyone. He asked us what we wanted and said:

“Yes, of course!”

And I immediately felt at home. Everything there seemed to be immersed in sweetness! As I approached the tabernacle, I had the impression that God himself was somewhat Portuguese and welcomed us thus: “My son, come closer.”

Observing Dona Lucilia in church

More than once, in the Sacred Heart Shrine, I would look at the members of the family and then observe my mother out of the corner of my eye, without her noticing. I perceived how earnestly she prayed! Anything could happen in church, but she never turned to the sides or took her eyes off the altar, at the top of which is the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I, on the other hand, looked everywhere – which was natural for a boy – and she let me do so. Then I thought:

“There is an attraction between the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mama. I have the impression that when she is looking at Him, there is an extraordinary life in her. And also, looking at Him, it seems to me that He has had such an effect on her that, in some way, He lives in her. How admirable He is! How perfect! How divine! How incomparable! But also... How much she resembles Him! Mama is thus a created model! How fantastic she is! Her kindness is a spark of His love. All this goodness that I appreciate so much was born of Him... The pinnacle of her perfections is in Him! If Mama were not devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, she would not have them. My affection and my unlimited confidence in her are explained by this!”

She was very reserved about her spiritual life and never told me about any grace she had received in church. I felt I should not ask, but I noticed that she was deeply affected by the atmosphere of the church and kept thinking:

“It is curious: there is some connection between this church and her. What is in Mama, in the altar and in the priest’s vestments is the same thing. She seems made to pray here, and the church seems made for Mama to pray. One resembles the other. How harmonious she is with this! Mama is happier here than at home, and this is her environment, where her soul opens up completely, which does not happen in other places.

“Here she accepts everything, inhales everything and adapts to everything! This environment lives in Mama and she receives an influence here that makes her more and more like the church, and then she spreads this to the family. All her affection is a radiance of this.

“But then, what is it? When we get home, I will talk to her to see if I feel the same way, and check if what she has is a reflection of what exists here or something she brings with her. I need to know, for I want to understand things!”



Therefore, on Sundays, when the family dispersed after lunch, I would enter my mother's room, begin to converse about anything, and notice qualities in her that seemed analogous to those I had noticed in the Church: a very dignified and respectable personality, but at the same time, one of indescribable affability and sweetness. She continually brought with her an atmosphere of contemplation, suggesting that her spirit was hovering in a very high region.

It was a reflection of God's goodness, infinite but condescending, which goes down to the smallest details: talking about the little sheep, paying attention to the chicken, pleasing the little child and meditating on the lily of the field. The lower it descends, the sweeter it becomes. And this brought with it the vague idea that, in the small world of the family, Mama was an image of God.

And I thought: "I see that she has the same thing that exists there, but I do not even know how to find the words to ask her about it. I will explain this one day!"

An archetypal episode

Everything I felt in the Church seemed to me to come from an infinitely superior spirit, which almost revealed itself and made itself felt mysteriously here, there and everywhere, through symbols and through that interior action within my soul, which filled me with veneration. It was the cause that sustained and made everything in the Shrine of the Sacred Heart shine like a very rich, faithful, precise and exact reflection of God Himself. And I thought: "It is curious, but it seems that everything here speaks to my soul with the voice that Jesus would have if He were on earth! This

is the very timbre of His voice! Deep down, it is the Sacred Heart of Jesus that is in Heaven!"

I cannot forget something that happened to me in that church, not just once, but on countless occasions – perhaps for years on end – which, however, on a certain day marked me more especially and remained in my memory as an archetypal episode.

I was attending Mass, enchanted by the figures, the colours, the stained glass, the Liturgy and the supernatural atmosphere that hovered in the air, when suddenly the whole picture came together in my mind and I concluded:

"Above all this there is Someone who is greater than everything! It is a curious thing. The Church does not seem like an institution, but rather a person who communicates through a thousand aspects. It has movements, grandeur, holiness and perfection, as if it were an immense 'soul' that expresses itself in all the Catholic churches of the world, all the images, all the Liturgy, all the organ chords and all the bell-ringing. This 'soul' wept with the requiems and rejoiced with the bells of Hallelujah Saturdays and Christmas eves. It weeps with me and rejoices with me. How I love this 'soul'!"

"I have the impression that, in relation to it, my soul is like a small resonance or repetition; something in which this 'soul' lives entirely, as if it were in a material temple. I feel in it like a drop of water in which the sun is reflected entirely. Like a miniature and a reflection, I contain this 'soul'!"

I could not explain what this "soul" was, but I had the impression that the whole doctrine and spirit of the Catholic Church enveloped me! Identifying myself with this *unum* of the Holy Church, immersing myself in it and getting used to living without any discrepancy with it, I found a splendid fullness, in which I felt more and more myself. This touched me to the depths of my soul, inspired me with gratitude, and left me incomparably more

enchanted than, for example, the carriages of Versailles.

I believe it was the presence of God in me, through the grace of Baptism.

"I believe in the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church!"

Then, at a certain moment, a splendid idea came to mind: "This is the spirit of the Roman Catholic Church! Mama received all this from the Church! The artists who built this temple and the priests who celebrate Mass also received their inspiration from the Church!"

At the same time, I became convinced that in the Holy Church everything was so logically and perfectly intertwined that it alone was the one true Church. Then my act of faith became fully explicit: "I believe in the Holy Roman Catholic Church!"

From this came an act of love: "She is worth everything! In such a way that everything I like is similar to her, but she is also similar to everything I like. She is the ideal of my existence! I want to live for the Church and I want to be like her, having this spirit for my whole life! And something makes me entirely in tune with her and only with her!" ❖

Taken, with slight adaptations, from: *Notas Autobiográficas* [*Autobiographical Notes*]. São Paulo: Retornarei, 2008, v.I, p.521-531

¹ Located in the Campos Eliseos neighbourhood of São Paulo, near the house where Plinio lived with his parents.

² From the Italian: literally, disappeared. A term coined to describe certain picturesque aspects – now having almost completely disappeared – of the Eternal City, immortalized in the watercolours of Italian painter Ettore Roesler Franz (1845–1907).

³ *Fräulein* Mathilde Heldmann, Plinio's German governess during his childhood.

⁴ Light cavalry soldiers.



Sing Unto the Lord a New Song

When the serenity of hindsight lets us appraise the events of past centuries with greater accuracy, we see that the insight of Gabrieli's soul was assertive: far from playing a detrimental role in the sacred setting, fitting musical instruments contribute to the grandeur of worship

✠ Fábio Henrique Costa



Perhaps few things are as difficult to express in words as music! In its varied and vast scope, the universe of music amounts to an art form that, without exaggeration, can be said to verge on the infinite, for it somehow participates in the immateriality proper to spirits.

That being the case, much of the satisfaction that fills our souls when we hear a lovely melody stems from this fact: it momentarily “frees” us from the fetters of the concrete world, which keep us from being better attuned to transcendent realities.

Another difficulty arises when the topic of music is discussed: since music causes multiple impressions on those who hear it,

sometimes even contradictory ones, it is hard to establish an equitable consensus in judging compositions and composers.

For example, how can it be explained that, in the Middle Ages, Pope John XXII was averse to the nascent polyphony, out of fear that plainchant would lose valued characteristics? Or that St. Pius X, at the outset of his pontificate, dedicated his first *motu proprio* to music, as an art that “is not always easily contained within the right limits”?²

And even today, how can we interpret the all-too-prevalent tendency to segregate the divine from the musical compositions used in the Liturgy?

Without aiming to reflect chiefly upon the philosophical aspects of this art form, this article will merely sketch some facets of the life-trajectory of an Italian composer,

born in the second half of the 16th century, who so aptly and effectively placed his musical aptitude at the Church's disposal: Giovanni Gabrieli.

We apologize in advance to the reader for our inability to transpose the sounds into written form... which is why most of what is presented here will only find its proper resonance if set in the tonal diapason of the Italian master's harmonies. Thus, we even invite you to listen to a sample composition of our musical prodigy from Venice as you read this article.

* * *

Art is an indicator of a people's prosperity! Regardless of its ambit of performance – from gastronomy to painting, from architecture to literature – when wisely cultivated, it serves as a type of banister and elevator for our senses so that, in this “valley of tears,” we may more easily discover vestiges of God.

Present in worship from the earliest times in the Old Covenant, why were musical instruments exiled from Christian Liturgy during so many centuries?

King David transfers the Ark of the Covenant, by Pieter van Lint - Liesborn Abbey Museum, Wadersloh (Germany)



If we cast a glance, *à vol d'oiseau*, at the trajectory of the Church, from its primal beginnings to 1552, likely the birth-year of Giovanni Gabrieli, it is notable how various imperatives of Christian charity gradually imbued society: human beings gradually shed their coarseness and, consequently, grew in the capacity to refine that “creative power” which is art.

Music was among the various human activities that saw advancement. It was an art never absent from the sanctuary – to add splendour and solemnity to ceremonies worthy of greater dignity – despite its winding and enigmatic course of progress.

The use of instruments in the Liturgy, however, has always generated particularly heated debate, even to this day...

Should musical instruments be sounded or silenced?

Although prominent historians such as Mario Righetti affirm that musical instruments “were probably banished from the temple because of their profane, sensual and clamorous nature,”³ the question seems to revolve around another point: perhaps the fact that humanity had become more sensual and less spiritual, more profane and less prayerful, is what prompted the production of instruments with such overtones, consequently preventing the Church from introducing them into the Liturgy much earlier.

Furthermore, it ought to be understood that musical instruments, far from being unfit for worship, have had a place in it since the primeval Old Covenant religion,⁴ as a means for praising God and expressing, in their own way, grace and heavenly favour. As a logical consequence, it would only seem natural for instruments to have been present in Christian worship from its inception.

Therefore, our Catholic soul is utterly dissatisfied when the historian simply states that “this Jewish musical-



Knut Nguyen

Far from being unfit for worship, musical instruments can be a means for praising God and expressing, in their own way, grace and heavenly favour, especially when allied to vocal song

International choir of the Heralds of the Gospel during a Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

instrumental tradition did not pass on to the early Church; the apostolic writings and those immediately following them make no reference to it.”⁵ The crux of the problem thus lies in discovering why this tradition was not carried on to the New Covenant.

One is led to believe – contrary to the dominant view – that the real reason for the absence of instruments in the Liturgy was the fact that society had been rendered brutish and coarse, to a greater or lesser degree, which kept people from conceiving music that was at once thoughtful, solemn, grandiose, and endowed with the sobriety that characterized plainchant.

In short, man hesitated to transpose his interior rapture into musical notes and feared that musical compositions would distance him from the virtue of religion.

Nevertheless, others regarded Gregorian chant as the sole expression of the Church’s universality in musical matters, thus curtailing this distinctive note. Now, as Mother and Teacher of peoples, her very richness demands that other musical styles, consonant

with her, be “baptized,” particularly for sacred worship.

The career of Giovanni Gabrieli

From this angle, and in this historical context, we can better understand Giovanni Gabrieli as a key figure. Born in Venice, little is known of his childhood except that he was introduced to music by his uncle Andrea Gabrieli, with whom he studied and from whom he drew his talent.

History further records that, long before achieving fame, Giovanni studied music in Munich, Germany, with the renowned Orlando de Lassus, in the court of Duke Albert V,⁶ where he remained until 1579.

Returning to his hometown, he took over as head organist at San Marco Basilica, following the resignation of Claudio Merulo – incidentally, a fine composer and likely responsible for the fame that was beginning to distinguish the Venetian school. The following year, possibly 1585, upon the death of his uncle Andrea, Giovanni Gabrieli additionally assumed the prestigious position of chief composer.



Early in his career, Gabrieli's concern was to publicly recognize the calibre of his master and mentor by compiling and disseminating countless works that his uncle had composed, paying him the tribute he owed for the training he had received. In his own words, he considered himself "almost a son" of Andrea.

Although Giovanni composed music in keeping with the styles of the time, he was particularly inclined toward sacred music, which explains why his entire early repertoire was vocal, since voices and instruments were still separated by an insurmountable barrier in sacred settings.

In fact, this was the situation in the historical period of the 16th century: "It was in Rome, shortly after the Council [of Trent], that Palestrina and his rival Victoria lived, initiators of a church music that would increasingly move away from the old polyphony to seek new paths. Until then, priests and theologians had strongly resisted anything that might deviate from the rule that only the human voice was worthy to pray to God: musical instruments seemed theatrical to them, prone to sensuality and pride."⁷

However, in Giovanni's eyes, this was a mistaken conception. Sacred vocal music, when combined with instruments, could soar to new heights of spirituality by externalizing "truths of Faith" that demand more grandeur and power; or, when nuanced by the strains of the organ and backed by additional instruments, it would be capable of expressing deeper and more tender sentiments, unreachable by the limitations of the human voice and the mere text.

In the person of this Venetian genius, humanity seemed to voice its desire to sing, from within the temple, a *new song* to the Lord with the psalmist David, accompanied by musical instruments (cf. Ps 33:3).

New harmonies resound in the sanctuary

Like the harpist of Scripture, Giovanni Gabrieli was not afraid to bridge the gap that long separated the human voice from musical instruments in sacred ambiances. For this undertaking, he chose as the stage for his innovative and rich compositions the centuries-old walls of the poetic Basilica of San Marco

in Venice, whose interior structure, chiselled by the delicacy and grace of Sansovino,⁸ favoured the resonance of his novel harmonies.

There, capitalizing on choir stalls that stood face to face, he was able to create impressive sonorous effects by positioning his musicians in two groups, which enabled him to make the most of a peculiar dynamic through successively strong and weak sounds. In this way, a choir or instrumental group was heard first on one side, followed by a response from the second ensemble on the other. There might also be a third group located near the altar, in the centre of the church, to "work out" the most important passages of the composition.⁹

The result was that, when correctly situated, the instruments could be heard with perfect clarity from far away. Thus, scores that looked strange on paper – for example, indicating a single

Giovanni Gabrieli did not fear to bridge the gap between the human voice and musical instruments in the sacred setting. For this, he chose the ancient walls of the Basilica of San Marco

Piazza and Basilica of San Marco, by Canaletto



stringed instrument being played against a sizable group of wind instruments – resounded in perfect balance in the interior of San Marco Basilica, thanks to the acoustics being mapped out by the composer’s own inspiration! The works *In Ecclesiis* and *Sonata pian’ e forte* are notable examples of this.¹⁰

The myths surrounding the use of instruments in the Liturgy were thus effectively dispelled: “One thinks of associating it with the glorification of God. From then on, its triumph was assured, especially the triumph of the typical church instrument: the organ, which made its appearance everywhere.”¹¹

Thus, at least as far as sacred music was concerned, Gabrieli’s genius would come to bear a weighty influence on the history of the art.

Diffusion throughout Europe

The Venetian master’s standing gained further prominence among the European elite when he became the organist at the *Scuola Grande di San Rocco* – a post he held until his death – since the Church of St. Roch featured the most prestigious and wealthy Venetian confraternity, rivalled only by that of San Marco in the splendour of its musical ensembles.

Thus, the tendencies of Baroque music would ready to be echoed, reconciling the human voice with the in-

strument, and not only with the organ, but even with the orchestra.

Naturally, several other European musicians, especially from Germany, were eager to travel to Venice to become acquainted with new knowledge. As a result, several students and admirers of Gabrieli became propagators of his compositions in other countries.

Among his students, Heinrich Schütz was particularly notable and perhaps one of the greatest glories that music owes to Gabrieli. It was he who adapted the Italian style of madrigals and *sacrae symphoniae* to the genuinely German spirit.

Sounds that contribute to the grandeur of worship

Now that centuries have elapsed, and the serenity of hindsight allows us to appraise events with greater accuracy, we see that the insight of Gabrieli’s soul was assertive: far from having a detrimental effect within the walls of sacred places, being somehow considered sensual or proud, musical instruments actually contribute to the grandeur of worship.

Today, what faithful soul does not relish being transported to a more joyous and beneficial reality at the sound of Gabrieli’s *sacrae symphoniae*, for example, reverberating through the



Photos: Reproduction

Many musicians drew new knowledge from Gabrieli and spread his art in other countries

Manuscript score of the work “Audite principes”, by Giovanni Gabrieli - Library of the University of Kassel (Germany)

majestic naves of St. Peter’s Basilica during the Easter Vigil, while the Pope moves from the presbytery to the baptismal font to bless the water that will transform poor humans into children of God?

At the sublime moment of Baptism, on the holiest of nights, the grand notes and musical intervals of Gabrieli – genius of the art – emphasize the dignity of the Sacrament, completing the scene.

Let us pay him admiration’s homage! ✚

¹ Cf. COMBARIEU, Jules. *Histoire de la musique*. 8.ed. Paris: Armand Colin, 1948, t.I, p.383.

² ST. PIUS X. *Tra le sollicitudine*.

³ Cf. RIGHETTI, Mario. *Historia de la Liturgia*. Madrid: BAC, 2013, v.I, p.1133.

⁴ It is even interesting to note a certain exorcistic character inherent in instrumental music: it was tunes from David’s harp that freed Saul from the evil spirit (cf. 1 Sm 16:15-23).

⁵ RIGHETTI, op. cit., p.1132.

⁶ Albert V, Duke of Bavaria, was one of the leaders of the Catholic Counter-Reformation against the German Protestants. As an influential mae-cenas, he was a great art collector and granted the musician Orlando de Lassus a prominent place in his court.

⁷ DANIEL-ROPS, Henri. *História da Igreja de Cristo. A Igreja dos Tempos Clássicos*.

cos (I). São Paulo: Quadrante, 2000, v.VI, p.129.

⁸ Andrea Contucci, known as Andrea Sansovino, was an Italian architect and sculptor who became influential in art during the High Renaissance period. The choir stalls of St. Mark’s Basilica adorned with three reliefs sculpted by him, provided the setting for countless interpretations by the composer Giovanni Gabrieli.

⁹ Although this polychoral style – *cori spezzati* – had been used elsewhere for decades, Gabrieli’s skill made it remarkably successful.

¹⁰ There are at least a hundred compositions by Giovanni Gabrieli: two sets of *sacrae symphoniae*, as well as *canzoni*, *sonatas* and *concertos*. Many of his works were published posthumously.

¹¹ DANIEL-ROPS, op. cit., p.129.



A Stained-Glass Window of Sounds

If it were possible to translate the “voice” of God into an instrument, it would certainly be similar to the organ: a true stained-glass window of sounds, capable of reflecting and transmitting divine grace, in a harmonious variety of nuances.

✠ Sr. Priscilla Stephanie Cerqueira



Anyone wishing to visit the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary in the municipality of Caieiras, in São Paulo, Brazil, enters the gates that lead to the Thabor Formation House of the Heralds of the Gospel. They encounter a beautiful statue of Our Lady of Zion on a column and, to the right, an inviting ramp, lined with trees.

After being greeted by the courteous gatekeepers, the visitor feels overcome by curiosity about what they will find beyond the path ahead, in the fresh air and cool shade of the appealing Atlantic forest – their first host, since no one else has yet appeared. As they ascend, they gradually become aware of the pulsating life of a community they do not quite know how to define: monastery, barracks, castle, cathedral – or all of the above, for here there is an air of all this.

As they step out of the vehicle, they can already sense something, through what they hear... Soothing chords coming from Heaven? Melodic breezes? The distant rumble of thunder? Angelic whispers? Our visitor, an attentive listener, cannot decide and wonders: what could it be?

Arriving at the esplanade in front of the basilica, he notices a vitality that is simultaneously recollected, prayerful, and effervescent. There he meets the Herald appointed to show the newcomers the various areas and tell them the story of the church. He climbs the steps of a *fer-à-cheval* staircase and enters the atrium. Forms, colours, proportions, and details, lights and shadows, voices and sounds form a whole made up of beauty, of spiritual and material realities, of something that human language cannot translate, but which the heart comprehends! ...

Beauties that speak to us of the Creator

God created human beings with an innate thirst for the infinite so that we would seek Him incessantly from the dawn of our existence, for He destined us for eternal happiness with Him, and here on earth we are expatriates, awaiting future glory in Heaven, as the Hail Holy Queen suggests: “After this exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.”

Now, in His infinite goodness, the Lord has given us certain “samples” of Paradise in this valley of tears, which give us a foretaste of what we

were created for. This is the reason for the natural beauty we contemplate in minerals, flora, and fauna, as well as in the marvellous works of art created by human genius, such as churches, castles, paintings, sculptures, and so many other wonders, which, elaborated according to the right order established by the Creator, speak to us of Him, the Source of all gifts, who gave humanity the ability to produce on earth tangible reflections of His perfection.

In the world of art, we highlight in this article one form that is at the special service of the Liturgy: sacred music. And within it, we will consider, in particular, the role of the organ.

An orchestra of orchestras

Coming in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, this instrument can produce sounds that are at times powerful and full-bodied, at other times delicate and simple, at others profound and spiritual.

For both listeners and the organist, it holds a mystery: for the former, there is the enigma of what sounds will follow the soft *Gedeckt 8'*, or when the thunderous *Clarion 4'* will fade, giving way to a *Harmonic Flute*

Playing an organ is like holding in your hands an orchestra of orchestras; a diamond capable of reflecting every colour, luminosity, and scintillation

4', and so on.¹ For the latter, there is always the suspense and expectation of how the instrument will respond to the inspirations and demands of his creativity. Being a wind instrument, it gives the impression that the sound, as it is emitted, is absorbed by something immaterial that will or will not produce the desired acoustic result, to touch souls according to what the Liturgy calls for at the moment.²

It is as if Angels, inspirers of the recollection, the intonation of the voices, and the imponderables of the ambience, assume the sound waves and, through them, make souls more sensitive to the mysterious voice of grace that murmurs in the depths of their hearts words of sweetness, peace, and confidence in God.³

This is one of the most moving effects produced by the nearly limitless diversity of timbres provided by a sizeable organ, such as the one in the aforementioned Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary. Playing it is like holding in your hands an orchestra of orchestras; a stained-glass window of sounds; a diamond capable of reflecting every colour, luminosity, and scintillation.

A glimpse at the internal mechanism of the organ

Our visitor, if they have never had the opportunity to closely examine a pipe organ, might wonder: what causes this kaleidoscope of such diverse sounds?

As incredible as it may seem to today's mindset, dominated by the idea that everything is the result of digital technologies, such a variety of sounds is produced mechanically. It is a complex but efficient system of keyboards, levers, springs, bellows, and other parts that move air toward pipes of various sizes and shapes, from which the sounds proper to the instrument emerge.

In general, the organ includes the family of flutes, strings, reeds, and diapasons – which are, strictly speaking, organ stops, as they do not seek to imitate other instruments – as well as other variations that further enrich the ample range of timbres. The number of keyboards, called manuals, can vary from one to six. Having more than one facilitates the mutation of sounds and volume, as each has its own specific registers.⁴

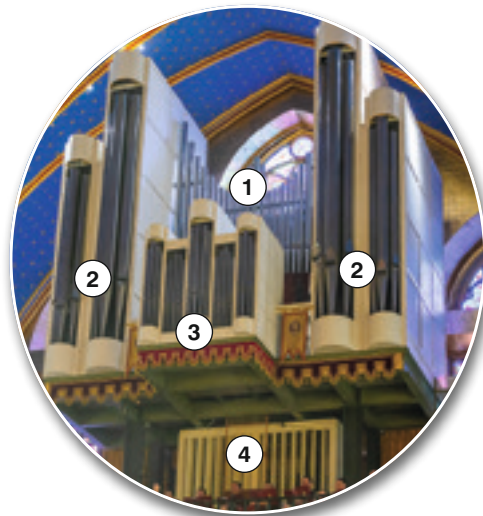
The first of our organ's three manuals, called the *Positiv*, features a tim-



Priscila Carqueia



Leandro Souza



Leandro Souza

Top of page: Organ of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil). Insets, from top to bottom: rank of pipes of the Positiv; the Great Organ; and general view with the parts marked: 1. Great Organ, 2. Pedals, 3. Positiv, and 4. Swell



Leandro Souza



Priscilla Cerqueira

More than merely listening to beautiful melodies or delighting in the spectacle of shapes and colours, we will profit by using these gifts to grow in faith and love of God

The author playing the organ on its inauguration day, September 21, 2024; inset, detail of the stops

bre more accessible to the public in the basilica, and it is with this manual that we accompany the hymns of the faithful. The second manual, also called the *Great Organ*, features the most powerful stops, such as the *16' 8' Trumpets*, the *5f Mixture*, and the *16' Bourdon*, among others. Finally, we have the *Swell*, the third manual, used to accompany the voices of soloists or to play soft solos.

The numbers on the stops indicate the measurements in feet of the various pipes, with the lowest, at 32', reaching up to twelve metres, and the highest, at 1', measuring approximately six millimetres.

The Catholic instrument par excellence

Registration or combination of the various stops is a complex art that

every organist must master, as the successful performance of the pieces depends on it. Each composition, whether from the Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, or Romantic periods, has its own special characteristics and requires the appropriate timbres.⁵ Furthermore, the choice of stops takes into account the difference between a solo performance, a strictly instrumental piece, or one accompanied by voices.

In short, the organ is a great instrument, whose main function is to assist the faithful in prayer, emphasizing the prevailing state of recollection and providing souls with a better disposition to receive the graces that God, the infinitely generous Father, bestows upon all who place themselves under the shelter the One whom He gave us as our immaculate and indefectible Mother: the Holy Church.

Come visit us!

What we have seen so far has been an attempt to explain the mysterious sounds our visitor with a refined ear has experienced.

However, more than listening to beautiful melodies, delighting in the spectacle of shapes and colours, or appreciating any other form of material beauty, he will profit by using these gifts to grow in faith and love for God, as one who is not satisfied with simply having pleasant impressions, but makes firm resolutions that bring him closer to the truth. Otherwise, he may fall into the same error as the Romans, accused by St. Paul of not elevating themselves to the Lord through creatures (cf. Rom 1:18-21).

Finally, dear reader, we conclude these lines by extending our warm invitation also to you: come and allow the melodies of adoration of the organ and the splendour of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary to touch your heart and thus strengthen the bonds that unite you to the Heavenly Father. ✠

¹ The *Gedeckt 8'* register imitates the sound of a wooden flute; the *Clarion 4'*, the sound of a bugle; the *Harmonic flute 4'*, the sound of a higher-pitched recorder.

² Far beyond technique or a simple complement, the role of the organist in the perform-

ance of any musical piece is extremely important, as he must not only accompany its unfolding, but also support the tuning of the singers and the correct interpretation of the speed and style desired by the composer, especially when dealing with sacred music, in which the

imponderables of the melody must accompany the sublimity of the mysteries celebrated (cf. FETIS, François-Joseph. *Treatise on Accompaniment from Score on the Organ or Piano-forte*. London: William Reeves, [s.d.], p.32-36).

³ Cf. SAINT-LAURENT, Thomas de. *O livro da confiança*. São Paulo: Retornarei, 2019, p.13.

⁴ Cf. BEDOS DE CELLES, OSB, François. *L'art du facteur d'orgues*. Paris: Saillant & Nyon, 1766, p.2-142.

⁵ Cf. FETIS, op. cit., p.35-36.

...that the world's smallest basilica is in Brazil?

Yes, and at an altitude of 1,746 metres! Serra da Piedade, a mountainous region located between the capital of Minas Gerais and the municipality of Caeté, is best known for the small sanctuary built on its summit, which, despite its simplicity, makes the splendid natural panorama even lovelier, especially because of the protection of the most beautiful of all creatures, Mary Most Holy.

The unassuming shrine, dedicated to Our Lady of Mercy, has its origin in an apparition of the Blessed Virgin to a mute girl, whom She cured. Construction began in 1767 at the initiative of the Portuguese-born Antônio da Silva Bracarena, aided by Manuel

Sérgio Mourão (CC by-sa 4.0)



Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Mercy - Caeté (Brazil)

Coelho Santiago. Built on the site of the apparition, the chapel soon began to attract large numbers of pilgrims. In 2017, after numerous renovations and

improvements, it was elevated to the status of minor basilica.

Typically Baroque in style, the tiny church boasts an image of the Virgin of Mercy on the main altar sculpted by Antônio Francisco Lisboa, known as *Aleijadinho* (the Little Crippled Man). Legend has it that the mountain on which it stands is rich in gold and silver, which served as a geographical reference for 17th-century explorers. Whether or not this is true remains a mystery, but one thing is certain: as Patroness of Minas Gerais, Our Lady chose that peak to show that, far more valuable than any worldly possession is her maternal love, poured out on her children who beg for her mercy. ✦

...why one of the liturgical vestments is rose?

Among the many elements that make up the Catholic Liturgy, the variety of colours of the vestments plays a symbolic and expressive role. With extreme zeal and dedication, Holy Church uses these colours to more effectively convey the meaning of the mysteries it celebrates.

The symbolism of many of the colours used throughout the Liturgical Year is self-evident. When we encounter the red vestment, for example, we immediately think of the fertile blood of the martyrs or the ardent flames of the Holy Spirit. But why rose-coloured?

Amidst the sober purple of Lent or Advent, the Church surprises us by clothing her ministers in a lighter hue. With its shade between scarlet and violet, rose is used on the third Sunday of Advent and on the fourth Sunday of Lent, called *Gaudete* and *Lætare*, respectively, because of the initial words of the entrance antiphons of the Masses on these days. At first glance, due to its vibrance, this colour would seem not very appropriate for a penitential period... However, its use has a highly pastoral purpose, representing the joy that the

Church experiences at Christmas and Easter, symbolized by three properties of the rose: its scent, its colour and its flavour, which reflect charity, joy and spiritual satisfaction.

Both during Lent and Advent, we eagerly await the most important episodes in the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ: His birth and His Resurrection. In hopeful anticipation of these solemnities – always celebrated with white vestments – and as if already anticipating them, the Church uses rose-coloured vestments to express her joy at reaching the threshold of such long-awaited events. Furthermore, having accompanied her children in their penitential sacrifice during the two periods of preparation, symbolized by the purple vestments, the Mystical Bride of Christ sympathizes with them and softens her rigour a little with this pleasant hue. ✦



A priest with rose-coloured vestments

A Carmelite from a Fairy-tale

Born of the noblest royal lineage, “Madame” Louise became the bride of Christ, thus becoming a princess of superior splendour.



✠ Bianca Maria dos Santos

What most defines the noble is the excellence of their person. By their birth, they are called to guide others and to represent God Himself. Such excellence, however, is imbued with even greater glory when united with the magnanimity of renunciation – so necessary to human existence, especially after being taken to a higher level by the Sacrifice of the Cross.

Renouncing the pomp of the world, she who was born of the noblest royal lineage seems to be an archetypal example of this reality. *Madame* Louise, the youngest daughter of Louis XV of

France and Maria Leszczynska, Princess of Poland, chose a higher path. By becoming the spouse of Christ, she also became, through generosity, a princess of superior splendour.

Education in Fontevraud

Born on July 15, 1737, little Louise was called *Madame Septième* – the Seventh Lady – although she was the eighth child, as one of her sisters had died. Surrounded by the attentions of twelve courtiers, whose sole function was to accompany her with constant ministrations, she held the power to command and be served from a young

age, and had an impetuous and vivacious temperament.

Her education as a girl – along with three of her sisters, *Mesdames* Victoire, Adélaïde, and Sophie – was entrusted to the Benedictine nuns of Fontevraud Abbey. Thus, she spent her early childhood in the healthy atmosphere of the convent, being masterfully formed in religion and in the love of eternal realities.

Two events especially marked this period. One day, when her maid delayed in attending to her, Louise climbed onto the bed railing and fell... The accident left her with a physical deformity and almost caused her death. The nuns prayed to the Blessed Virgin for her, and miraculously the little girl was cured. The episode marked the beginning of her devotion to the Mother of God.

On another occasion, feeling offended by one of her ladies-in-waiting, she said to her: “Am I not the daughter of your king?” To which the lady replied: “And I, *Madame*, am I not the daughter of your God?” Thus, baptismal dignity was illustrated to the princess, who immediately apologized, very impressed.

Louise had a very clear conscience, which allowed her to easily correct herself when she noticed her faults, and she demonstrated great zeal for duties of piety, in which she obtained strength for spiritual combat.

She wrote in her Eucharistic meditations: “As soon as my first years passed, as soon as the teachings of Your



Francisco Lecaros



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Two factions were clashing in the French court: those who approved of the king's profligate conduct and those who opposed it

Louis XV - Royal Palace of Caserta (Italy); and Marie Leszczynska, by Charles-André van Loo - Museum of the History of France, Palace of Versailles (France)

holy religion penetrated my soul, You brought forth in me an affectionate piety toward the Sacrament of the Altar. I longed for the moment of receiving You in it, of possessing You in it. A living faith and an ardent love, increased by new gifts of Your grace, further increased my desires. You heard them and answered them, God of goodness, You crowned them by giving me Your Sacred Body as food. O gift that I will thank You for until the last moment of my life!"²¹

On November 21, 1748, Louise made her First Communion, at the age of eleven. In October 1750 she returned to Versailles, where she would remain until 1770. The shock of the difference between the blessed ambience of the abbey and the moral decadence of the French court must have been considerable...

The difference between two worlds

Innumerable excesses in the realm of morality marred the court, where worldly pleasure was the ultimate goal of existence. "No era was more excessively sophisticated, or more urbanely libertine than that one. One could say that everything was permitted, that everything was admitted in the vein of human weaknesses, provided that the rules of etiquette and good manners were respected."²²

Analysing this sad reality with a certain psychological sense, it is not difficult to imagine what it meant for *Madame Louise*, a righteous and ardent soul, to come into contact with such permissiveness among those who should have been the vanguard of good example and rectitude.

And what was most disconcerting was that this decadence was based on the relativism of the private life of the king, her father, around whom two factions contended: that of the majority of the royal family, which disapproved of his adultery; and the parti-



Amidst the moral decadence of the court unfolded the adolescence of Louise, who chose the most perfect way

"Madame" Louise, by Jean-Marc Nattier - Museum of the History of France, Palace of Versailles (France)

sans of his concubinage, favouring the licentious behaviour of the sovereign and the interests of the Revolution.

Louise maintained open hostility towards the king's concubines. She allied herself especially with her brother, the Dauphin Louis Ferdinand, whose virtues were well known to the French, both possessing a kindred greatness of soul.

Maria Leszczyńska, her mother, was also "the noblest model of all religious and social virtues [...]; while she lived, the queen promoted in the court of Louis XV the dignified and imposing aspect that is due to a great power."²³

In this dichotomy of conceptions of life present in the French court, the princess' adolescence unfolded, and, strengthened by grace, she would choose the most perfect path.

Her vocation becomes clear

It is said that *Madame Louise* enjoyed arduous and even exhausting exercise. Once, while hunting, her horse became frightened and threw her a considerable distance. She almost fell under the wheels of a carriage that was speeding by.

When offered a ride back to the palace, she refused and asked for her horse to be brought to her. When the nervous animal was presented to her, Louise mounted it, dismissing the concern of those present; she soon dominated it and continued the ride. Upon return to the palace, she thanked Our Lady for this second intervention in her life.

In moments of reflection, events like this certainly sustained her in the practice of good and the exercise of piety.

During this period, God visited the royal family, calling some of its most virtuous members to appear before Him, a fact that marked Louise's soul. In 1752, *Madame Henriette*, her sister, died of intestinal tuberculosis. In 1765, the Dauphin Louis Ferdinand died of the same illness, followed by his wife two years later. Her grandfather died in an accidental fire in Poland, and her mother passed away in 1768.

The mourning over these events seems to have kept the princess at court for a long time, since she was concerned about her father. However, she had long since decided to embrace monastic life.

A Carmelite heart at the court of Versailles

In 1751, Louise witnessed *Madame de Rupelmonde's* entry into the Carmelite convent of Compiègne. The ceremony captivated her in every way, helping her to define her vocation.

From then on, the princess became increasingly withdrawn and distant from comforts. She dedicated herself to meditation, following the liturgical year, and for this she sought solitude, despite her lively temperament, which she had to control. "I feel it: He [the Lord] is calling me to something higher, and is drawing me more specifically to His service," she wrote in her notes.

Without neglecting her obligations as a princess – which included official dinners, receptions for ambassadors and military reviews, as well as en-



"Have I not known enough of the world to hate it forever, to never regret? I have considered so many times, one by one, all the delights of this state, which I wish to renounce!"

Gallery of mirrors - Palace of Versailles (France);
inset, Venerable Therese of St. Augustine, by Anne-Baptiste Nivelon

Myrabella (CC by-sa 3.0)

tainments such as art exhibitions, balls, games, theatre performances and musical concerts – she began her consecrated life without yet having left the palace. "That everywhere, even in the places most dedicated to the world, I may have a crucified heart, the heart of a Carmelite,"⁵⁵ she prays in a novena to St. Teresa of Jesus.

In 1762, Louise obtained the Carmelite constitutions and a monastic habit, which she used when she could be alone in her apartments. "My prayers, always prepared by the exercise of the presence of God, to whom I will rise at intervals, will no longer suffer from the vividness of my imagination, from the unhappy dissipation that almost necessarily results from relations with the world, nor from excessive preoccupation with myself."⁵⁶

In these words, one perceives Louise's first conversion and the search for inner recollection, preparatory for the contemplative life in Carmel.

And as she progresses, her conviction becomes firmer: "Everything around me seems to invite me to settle in this land, apparently smiling and happy; everything within me cries out that it is nothing but a place of exile and pilgrimage."⁵⁷

Every day the princess makes a thorough examination of conscience. It is thought-provoking to read what she demands of herself in her meditations:

"Have I always seriously striven to examine myself, to follow myself closely, to develop all the habitual motives that guide my actions, to weigh my iniquities on the scales of the sanctuary, to detest them all without reservation or admixture, to prevent them with the necessary measures, to repair them through the holy mortifications of penance, through the humiliations and pains of sincere repentance?"⁵⁸

It is clear from her own words that Louise leads a humble life, aspiring to sacrifice and to the Cross of Our Lord. She avoids drawing near to the palace's heating on cold days, overcomes her aversion to the smell of candles, and her difficulty to remain kneeling for long periods. Her dedication to the needy is also well-known: she gives all the money she receives for her personal expenses to the poor, never using it for herself.

Finally, in Carmel

Only the Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, knew of her aspirations to the religious life. The princess made a novena to St. Teresa, asking for strength to overcome her father's tenderness, and begged the prelate to intercede for her with the king. Louis XV was dismayed by the news and asked for fifteen days to think it over. Perceiving it to be a genuine calling from God, he gave his paternal

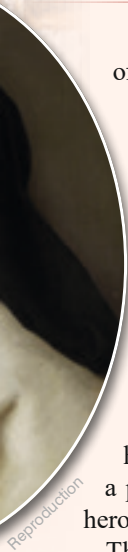
blessing to his daughter's vocation.

It was with immense generosity that Louise surrendered herself to God. She knew well that her prayers and sacrifices would weigh on the divine scale in favour of the conversion of her father and the court. "Have I not known enough of the world to hate it forever, to never regret? I have considered so many times, one by one, all the delights of this state, which I wish to renounce,"⁵⁹ she affirmed.

In expressing her opinion about the princess' departure, *Madame Campan*, governess of the king's daughters, stated: "*Madame's* soul was superior, the princess loved great things! She often interrupted my reading, exclaiming: 'How beautiful! How noble!' Thus, nothing more could be expected of her than this admirable action: to exchange the palace for a cell and her beautiful dresses for a habit of coarse wool. That is what she did."⁶⁰

It is clear that after *Madame Louise* received the habit on September 10, 1770, at the Carmelite convent of Saint-Denis, with the name Sister Therese of St. Augustine, she was given the most varied opportunities to fight for souls and for France.

Appointed mistress of novices, she gives us an interesting account of this role: "How do you expect me to have a moment to myself when I am in charge



Reproduction

of thirteen novices whose fervour must be continually moderated? I only find difficulty when I have to make them take their rest.”¹¹

Shortly afterwards she was elected superior and was admired by the entire community. Sober and serene, with no complacency toward evil or excessive rigour, she distinguished herself by the good sense of her character and by her care of her sisters. She was a prioress who knew how to form heroines of love and selflessness.

The princess also served as treasurer of the community and undertook the reconstruction of the convent church. Several debts acquired previously were resolved by her perspicacity in administration.

For the Church and for France

The Carmelite princess spared no effort interceding with her father in favour of the Church. Later, during the reign of Louis XVI, she sought to influence the sovereign’s indecisive spirit to take the right position and be upright in the exercise of his royal mission. Her influence over him was so beneficial that the Revolution feared her and sought to block this ray of light that shone upon the monarch.

She firmly corrected him for his weakness in signing the Edict of Tolerance, recognizing civil rights for Protestants. She saw in this attitude the influx of ideas from the Enlightenment and the great catastrophes that could hence befall France.

Sister Therese of St. Augustine was also openly opposed to the Jansenist errors that were spreading at the time, seeking to save countless religious who had adhered to this heresy. Moreover, due to the prestige she enjoyed, she obtained from the king the authorization for fifty-eight Carmelite nuns to be received in French territory, after the expulsion from the Austrian states of all contemplative religious, by order of Emperor Joseph II.

An accurate way to understand her august personality is to look at her correspondence, in which the Carmelite nun and the princess unite to the advantage of the Church and for the public good.

Death by poisoning?

The possibility is raised in History that the princess was poisoned. Indeed, it is said that during this period she received an anonymous envelope containing relics. After opening it, she found a handful of hair covered in a mysterious powder. Upon inhaling it, she immediately felt its noxious effects: “She said not a word, and the doorkeeper saw her quickly throw the envelope into the fire. *Madame* Louise died a month later, on December 23, 1787, after weeks of atrocious suffering.”¹² There was no diagnosis for her illness, and the princess died exclaiming: “At a gallop, at a gallop to Paradise!”

Since everything she did stemmed from a healthy impetuosity, she would not have been any less hasty in the supreme moment of launching herself into the unexpected to conquer Heaven!

Did she fulfil her mission? It is impossible to doubt! Dr. Plinio affirms this, considering the religious revival in France even under the grip of the Revolution: “It is evident: the immolation of the Venerable Louise of France was not unrelated to this, for if the life of the righteous is precious before God, the life of this righteous woman necessarily was of great value to Him, as it was to men!”¹³

We can affirm without hesitation that *Madame* Louise’s greatest honour is that of having been an obstacle to revolutionary action in France. Moreover, she contributed to the birth of a religious movement there that opposed these errors and, despite appearances to the contrary, triumphed before God. ✦



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Her influence over the king was so beneficial that the Revolution sought to block this ray of light

Louis XV visits his daughter in Carmel, by Maxime Le Boucher - Museum of Art and History of Saint-Denis (France)

¹ VENERABLE THERESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE. *Méditations eucharistiques*. Lyon: Théodore Pitrat, 1810, p.47.

² HENRI ROBERT. *Os grandes processos da História*. Porto Alegre: Globo, 1961, v.VI, p.158.

³ CAMPAN, Jeanne Louise Henriette. *A camareira de Maria*

Antonieta. Memórias. Lisboa: Aletheia, 2008, p.11.

⁴ VENERABLE THERESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE, op. cit., p.111.

⁵ Idem, p.292.

⁶ Idem, p.106.

⁷ Idem, p.3-4.

⁸ Idem, p.103.

⁹ Idem, p.286.

¹⁰ CAMPAN, op. cit., p.13-14.

¹¹ PROYART, Liévin-Bonaventure. *Vie de Madame Louise de France*. 2.ed. Paris: Librairie d’Education de Perisse Frères, 1849, t.I, p.226.

¹² COHALAN, Kevin. Une énigme du Carmel. La princesse em-

poisonnée. In: *Dossier Histoire des Crimes du Plateau*. Montréal. Year VIII. No. 1 (March-May, 2013), p.10.

¹³ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. A força do bom exemplo [The Power of Good Example]. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XXVI. No. 303 (June, 2023), p.24.



The Seed of a Glorious Future

Guide, support and safeguard of her son's innocence, Dona Lucilia was the golden and magnificent seed from which sprang Dr. Plinio's vocation.

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

Frequently, the spiritual state of the mother conditions that of the son, for God takes into account the mother's fidelity when giving to her offspring the graces necessary for the fulfilment of their mission. To properly discharge this duty, a wise mother must pray, have a sound interior life, frequent the Sacraments and, by doing so, benefit from grace and make progress in her spiritual life. In this way, she will ensure that her own holiness will be reflected in her children.

Our Lord says in the Gospel: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Mt 5:6); a mother's love for her child must be such that she hungers and thirsts for perfection and wishes to devote herself entirely to his sanctification so that, when she is with the child, she will delight him and inspire him to exclaim: "How beautiful it is to be holy!"

The privilege of having a good mother

This was the opinion of Dr. Plinio: "The best of universities cannot play the role of the mother: that of providing, within her perspective that she transmits to her son, a number of general notions, [...] which will project themselves upon his entire life. After drawing from her the good influences that effectively prepare him for the Catholic Church and that impart to his soul a great avidity to embrace the

Catholic Church, when this son reaches the end of his life's course he will perceive that it is in accord with what he received from her at the outset."

If we were to form a concrete idea of the privilege it is to have a good mother, one in whom shines the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who takes her son in her arms with warmth, affection, and a way of being that gradually opens his eyes to reality and gives him the initial impetus along the right path, we would have a clear notion in mind of Dona Lucilia's role in the spiritual ascension of Dr. Plinio.

He bore witness to this in the praise which he rendered her soon after she had breathed her last breath: "I observed her beautiful soul with unwavering attention, and that is why I so loved her. To such a point that even if she were not my mother, but someone else's, I would have cared for her just the same and would have found a way to live

close to her. Mother taught me to love Our Lord Jesus Christ; she taught me to love the Holy Catholic Church."

A medieval soul, raised up for the future

God, in His infinite wisdom, prepared the blossoming of Dr. Plinio's elevated vocation in advance, giving him Dona Lucilia for a mother. Her soul was adorned with the graces of the Middle Ages and with all that was best in the *Ancien Régime*¹ and in the *Belle Époque*; in other words, what the era of the cathedrals and the Crusades produced "*post mortem*", after the revolutionary decadence had set in. In reality, based on Dr. Plinio's words and the Author's personal experience, he considers that Dona Lucilia possessed something additional, which did not exist in any previous age.

Indeed, a sound theological principle asserts that the Church, inasmuch as it is the Mystical Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, does not remain inert throughout time but will grow constantly in grace and sanctity until the end of the world. As long as a baptized person exists on the face of the earth, the Church will be alive and progressing, because it is assured by the promise of immortality made by Our Lord.

Within the context of this growth, Dona Lucilia represented a golden and magnificent seed, full of iridescent hints of some good thing to come in the future.

What a privilege it is to have a good mother, in whom shine the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who takes her son in her arms with true affection!

*A small, humble
and overlooked seed
of innocence*

A comment made by Dr. Plinio in this respect in 1977 is illustrative:

“There was in her spirit a most elevated point, which was the domain of her innocence. What relation does this domain of innocence have with my innocence? And what relation does this domain of innocence have with her role in history? [...] [She] retained, above all, the good aspects of the nineteenth century, which were the still-living medieval traditions; and her soul was a continuation of these. As such, I began to love the Middle Ages in her, and I often thought: ‘How like Mama they are.’

“However, Mama did not have an exact notion of what the Middle Ages had been. She had a great liking for Gothic things, but her soul was more Gothic than what she observed in the Gothic. She was a most faithful echo, albeit subconscious, of that glorious era of faith, and while the whole world was decaying and abandoning [...] the spirit of the Middle Ages, she begot a son who was an enthusiast of Medieval Christianity.

“She is the hyphen, the bridge between all that formerly existed and the future. She represents the final lamentation of the past, weeping at its death. And her son was destined by Our Lady to found a family of souls which would be the dawning of the resurrected Middle Ages in the Reign of Mary. [...] To be precise, the word *hyphen* says little: it is



Dona Lucilia with her son, Plinio; in the background, an interior view of the Thabor Formation House, Caieiras (Brazil)

Dona Lucilia's great mission was to be a small and overlooked seed, but one that was full of iridescent hints of good things to come in the future

the last seed of a splendid tree that perishes, but from which will be born another, still greater tree. She was this seed: humble, small, overlooked, leaving behind her no vestige other than that one, but leaving that one. And such is her great role in history, her great mission.”

Given the extraordinary vocation of Dr. Plinio, was it not natural that he be born of an innocent mother, as was

Dona Lucilia, who never committed a grave sin during the ninety-two years of her long life? Yes, this calling, according God's plan from all eternity, would be founded on innocence, without which it would be impossible for Dr. Plinio to fulfil it. It is from this innocence that so many other privileges, gifts and benefits would arise, which Providence wished to bestow upon him.

For this reason he was entrusted to such a virtuous mother, a true well-spring, a flourishing garden of righteousness, with the objective of his having before him a point of analysis, of attraction and of sustenance for his own innocence. ✚

Taken, with slight adaptations, from:

CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio.
O dom de sabedoria na mente, vida e obra de [The Gift of Wisdom in the Mind, Life and Work of]
Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira.

Città del Vaticano-São Paulo: LEV; Lumen Sapientiae, 2016, v.I, p.109-114

¹ From French: Old Regime. The expression was originally used by the Girondist and Jacobin agitators to describe in a pejorative manner the monarchical system of government of the Valois and the Bourbons prior to the French Revolution of 1789. In reality, this epoch stood out for the splendour of its ceremony in the life of the court and for the harmonious and hierarchical order which prevailed in society.

Ronny Fischer



1

Xavier Jacob



2

Cristopher Domingues



3

Guarany



4



5

Sérgio Oliveira



6

Marian activities – The month of October was filled with Marian activities, among which we highlight the Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Asuncion, Paraguay, commemorating the 108th anniversary of the final apparition of Our Lady of Fatima (photo 2); the “Afternoons with Mary” held at the Sameiro Shrine in Braga, Portugal, with the presence of Metropolitan Archbishop José Manuel Garcia Cordeiro (photo 6), at the Mayita Garden event centre in Mexico City (photo 1), and at the Parish of St. Paul in Encarnación, Paraguay (photo 3); the procession for the Taper of Our Lady of Nazareth held in Belém, Brazil (photo 5), in which members of the Heralds of the Gospel participated; and the Marian mission and gathering for members of the “Mary, Queen of All Hearts Shrine” apostolate in Pavuna, Brazil (photo 4).

Fotos: João Lucas Guimarães



1



2

Derivaldo



3

Bragança Paulista Diocese (Brazil) – In October, the choir and orchestra of the Clerical Society Virgo Flos Carmeli seminarians enlivened the festivities for the Patron Saint with their music at the Parish of The Child Jesus and St. Benedict in the city of Francisco Morato, with the participation of Bishop José Maria Pinheiro, Emeritus of Bragança Paulista (photo 1), and at the St Benedict Church in Bragança Paulista, with the presence of diocesan Bishop Sérgio Aparecido Colombo (photo 2); as well as the solemnity of the Patroness of Brazil at the Our Lady of Aparecida Pastoral Centre, in Caieiras (photo 3).

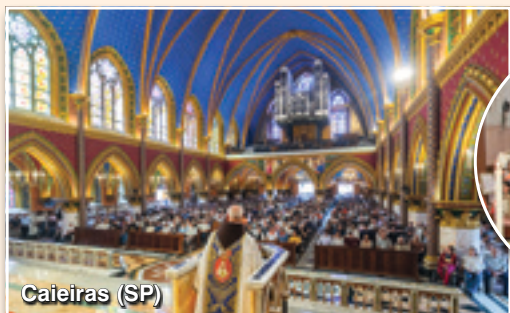


Devotion to Mary, a Sign of Predestination!

New groups completing the Reconquest Catholic Formation Platform course from the Heralds of the Gospel made their solemn consecration to Our Lady as slaves of love, according to the method of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. “One of the unmistakable signs that a person is led by the Spirit of God is the devotion he has to Mary,” affirms this great Marian Saint.

We highlight below the ceremonies held at the Cerro de los Angeles Shrine in Getafe, Spain; at the Chapel of the

Ascension of the Lord, in Pachuca, Mexico; and in Brazil, at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras, at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Fortaleza; at the Parish of Our Lady of Health, São Paulo; at St. Therese Parish, Manaus; at Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish, Cidade Estrutural (DF); at the Church of Our Lady of Divine Providence, Rio de Janeiro; at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Juiz de Fora (MG); and in the Heralds’ houses in Joinville (SC), Maringá (PR) and Cuiabá.



Stephen Nami



Pirio Sávio



Eric Salas



Maria Fernanda Aguiar



Sérgio C. Lima



Douglas Esteves



Ewerton Sávio



Romy Fiszner



Danielle Florindo



Maria Alice de Souza



Rafael Miranda



Alan Arauna



Photos: Marcliber Martínez



United States – The Church of St. Agnes in Key Biscayne, Florida, paid homage to Our Lady of Fatima on October 19. The event included the solemn crowning of the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, followed by the celebration of Holy Mass.

Photos: Rogério Baldasso



Italy – From October 16 to 19, a Marian mission was carried out at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Trappitello, Messina. Moments of prayer and catechesis were interspersed with visits by the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to homes, schools, and commercial establishments.

Nuno Moura



Nuno Moura

Portugal – The Heralds of the Gospel participated in the procession at the Monastery of St. Michael of Refojos, in Cabeceiras de Bastos, held on September 29 in honour of the Holy Archangel (photo 2), and in the celebration in homage to Our Lady of the Apparition at the Church of Pópulo, in Braga, presided over by Metropolitan Archbishop José Cordeiro, on October 12 (photo 1). The institution has also been promoting Eucharistic Adoration followed by Holy Mass every Saturday at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Lisbon (photo 3).



Photos: Diego Brites

Paraguay – On October 12, the 108th anniversary of the final apparition of Our Lady of Fatima was commemorated at the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Ypacarai, with the solemn crowning of the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, followed by the celebration of Holy Mass, presided over by Archbishop Vincenzo Turturro, Apostolic Nuncio to Paraguay, and a musical concert in honour of the prelate for his birthday.



Roberto Hernández



Kassiano Trindade



Photos: Daniele Fiorindo



Roberto Salas

Sacrament of Confirmation – In October, dozens of the faithful prepared by the Heralds of the Gospel received the Sacrament of Confirmation. The above photos show ceremonies held at Parish of St. Helen in San Salvador, El Salvador, by Archbishop Luigi Roberto Cona, Apostolic Nuncio to that country (photo 1); at the house of the institution in Guatemala City, by Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, Apostolic Nuncio to Guatemala (photo 5); at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Juiz de Fora, Brazil, by Metropolitan Archbishop Gil Antônio Moreira (photos 3 and 4); and at the institution's house in Campos dos Goytacazes, Rio de Janeiro, by Diocesan Bishop Roberto Francisco Ferrería Paz (photo 2).



Docility to the Lord's Inspirations



✠ Sr. Isabel de Sousa, EP



Jonathan and David - St. Philip and St. James Church, Groby (United Kingdom)

For God, it makes no difference to bring about the triumph of the good by means of many men or through just one; what matters is the docility of His chosen ones to the inspirations of grace.

When we read through the annals of Bible History, we often come across extraordinary deeds that are beyond human comprehension. Who could explain, for example, Jacob's prophetic boldness in fighting with the Angel of the Lord for an entire night in order to obtain his blessing? Or who would question the shrewd daring of Judith, who, alone, cut off the head of the dreadful Holofernes and freed Israel from the Assyrians?

These ancient heroes, if they lived in our days, would perhaps be labelled reckless by some practical minds. However, God often inspires elect souls filled with faith to actions that seem foolhardy at first glance, but which are actually holy and effective in promoting His glory and confounding the wicked. Their examples, recorded in the inspired texts, can certainly teach us useful lessons when adapted to present realities.

Let us consider, then, one of these eloquent and less-known episodes narrated in Holy Scripture.

Without weapons or combatants

After entering the Promised Land, for a long time the Israelites were ruled directly by God, in the person of judges and prophets. At a certain point, however, wishing to be like other nations, they demanded a king to rule over them. Divinely inspired, the prophet Samuel anointed Saul as sovereign, a Benjaminite who, unfortunately, dis-

tanced himself from the Lord soon thereafter, disobeying His laws and precepts.

Now, during his reign, the chosen people found themselves in great distress: Jonathan, Saul's son and a brave warrior, devastated the Philistine garrison at Gibeah, attracting their hatred upon the Hebrews. The Philistines gathered "to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude" (1 Sm 13:5), while there were only six hundred Jews prepared for battle, for many "hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns" (1 Sm 13:6), trembling with fear.

In addition to the vast disproportion between the armies, there was yet another obstacle: "there was no smith to be found throughout all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said, 'Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears' [...]. So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan; but Saul and Jonathan his son had them" (1 Sm 13:19, 22).

Without swords, with insufficient men, and having to fight under the command of a sinful king: such was the predicament of the Hebrews...

A daring attack

One day Jonathan, seized by divine inspiration, said to his armour-bearer (cf. 1 Sm 14):

“Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on yonder side.”

And without telling his father Saul, he set out for a position near some high, steep cliffs, from where he could attack the enemy camp. The people were also unaware of Jonathan’s departure.

Arriving at the canyon, he invited his armour-bearer: “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us; for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few.”

The soldier, faithful to his lord and to the voice of God, replied: “Do all that your mind inclines to; behold, I am with you, as is your mind so is mine.”

Jonathan then asked the Most High for a sign and made the following proposal: “Behold, we will cross over to the men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say to us, ‘Wait until we come to you,’ then we will stand still in our place, and we will not go up to them. But if they say, ‘Come up to us,’ then we will go up; for the Lord has given them into our hand. And this shall be the sign to us.”

Then the brave warriors approached their opponents, who shouted: “Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hid themselves. Come up to us, and we will show you a thing.”

Filled with enthusiasm, Jonathan understood the sign sent by God and said to his armour-bearer: “Come up after me; for the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel.” Jonathan rushed over the rocks and reached the Philistines, who fell one after another before him, and were killed by the armour-bearer who followed him.

The terror of God spread throughout the land

When they saw the turmoil caused by Jonathan, “there was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people; the garrison and even the raiders trembled; the earth quaked; and it became a very great panic” (1 Sm 14:15).

Saul, who remained in the camp, was unaware of what was happening. Soon the sentries saw a crowd of fugitives scattering in all directions. They did the roll call and found that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing. Meanwhile, confusion and astonishment only increased in the Philistine camp, where they turned their swords against each other.

The Israelites who had previously fled, when they learned that their adversaries were fleeing, went out to pursue them. On that day, through a profound inspiration, which to human eyes might have seemed great imprudence, “the Lord delivered Israel” (1 Sm 14:23).

“The bow of Jonathan turned not back!”

Jonathan shines as a symbol of faith and generosity in the Old Testament.

Strong and valiant in battle – because he placed all his trust in the help of the Lord God of hosts – gifted with the capacity of a commander, and esteemed by the people (cf. 1 Sm 14:45), he was the perfect candidate for the throne of Israel after Saul’s death. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to yield his place, in a gesture of profound admiration, to the Lord’s anointed, David, “because he loved him as his own soul” (1 Sm 18:3): “you shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you” (1 Sm 23:17).

David esteemed Jonathan so much that later, when he learned of his death on the battlefield, he composed a beautiful song in his honour, even praising – out of consideration for Jonathan – the memory of Saul, even though Saul had disobeyed God:

“Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places! How are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the



Through an inspiration that to human eyes might seem reckless, “the Lord gave victory to Israel”

Jonathan in battle, by J. Fouquet

daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult.

“Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor upsurging of the deep! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled [...] the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. [...]”

“How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain upon thy high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!” (2 Sm 1:19-27).

Let us ask the valiant Jonathan to assist us in all the battles of life and intercede for us, so we may imitate his holy audacity, his admiration and profound humility, his complete docility to the voice of grace! ✚

Admiration, Service and Sacrifice Pervaded with Joy

Pierre Toussaint understood the true freedom of God's children, and the virtue of admiration transformed his tendencies and mentality.

✠ Raúl Ríos



The heroic demonstrations of faith that are given in Africa demand our respect and inspire our veneration. If naivety had led us to imagine that the age of martyrs was relegated to history books, and to forget that we will have tribulations in this world (cf. Jn 16:33), our African brothers and sisters today bring us copious testimonies of blood, putting to shame, by their example, so many parts of the world afflicted by a veritable demographic winter with regard to Baptisms. There, where religious persecution is rampant, the number of children of God and ministers of Our Lord Jesus Christ is increasing.

In honour of these our brethren, we evoke the example, not of martyrdom, but of Christian life and heroic virtues of the Venerable Pierre Toussaint.

Even at first glance, the characteristics of a true gentleman and, moreover, of a humble Catholic man, a master of his passions, can be recognized in his posture, his penetrating gaze, the welcoming and discreet inclination of the head, his hand resting calmly but firmly on the table, in short, in the overall impression he gives of nobility, cleanliness, strength and modesty. What is the origin of so many qualities?

Pierre was born into slavery in 1766 in Haiti, then a French colony on the western part of the island of Saint-

Domingue. The masters he served, the Bérard family, were affluent landowners. Let us not imagine, however, the cruel slavery of the pagans, nor certain abuses of the colonial period. His grandmother Zenobia, was the children's nanny, and became so esteemed for her loyal service that she was granted her freedom. His mother, Ursula, was *Madame Bérard's* private maid. Pierre, in turn, devoted himself to agriculture and won everyone's hearts with his joy and gentility. An acquaintance describes him: "I remember Toussaint among the slaves, dressed in a red jacket, full of spirits and very fond of dancing and music, and always devoted to his mistress"¹, the young and cheerful Mrs. Bérard.

When Jean Bérard returned to France with his family and some slaves, leaving his eldest son in charge of his lands in America, the French Revolution broke out, which soon spread throughout the colonies with the frenetic furore of the dubious ideals of fratricidal "liberty". Realizing that his properties in Haiti were at risk, the patriarch decided to flee to New York, hoping to recover them when peace returned.

To this end, he travelled a few years later to the island of Saint-Domingue, while his wife remained in New York awaiting news. And news soon arrived,

as tragic as the dramatic succession of Job's misfortunes (cf. Job 1:13-19). A first letter from Mr. Bérard announced that all the properties in the colony were irretrievably lost. Soon a second letter informed Mrs. Bérard of her husband's death from pleurisy. She had barely recovered from the trauma when notice of the bankruptcy of the firm where the family's assets were invested arrived at her doorstep. All that remained of the poor unfortunate woman's riches was a devoted and generous slave, the good Pierre, who from that moment on devoted himself entirely and selflessly to his mistress.

It was not long before angry creditors came knocking. Having forsaken the luxuries she once enjoyed, Madame Bérard found herself in an increasingly distressing situation. She summoned Pierre one day, gave him some jewellery and told him to sell it for the best price possible. With a heavy heart, he could not bring himself to obey. A few days later, gathering all the savings he had made from his work as a hairdresser, he surprised his mistress by placing two packages in her hands: one with the jewellery and the other with the equivalent amount of money. To the hairdresser who came to collect old debts, he offered a period of service in exchange and paid off the debt, completing the



Reproduction



Pierre Toussaint at the end of his life; in the background, St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, whose crypt houses his mortal remains

amount with the New Year's bonus he had received.

"His industry was unceasing, every hour of the day was employed; when released, his first thought was his mistress, to hasten home and try to cheer her. [...] His great object was to serve her"² and he did so with to the utmost, sacrificing himself silently. Whenever he could, he set her table with delicacies and rare tropical fruits. Seeing her downcast, he would persuade her to prepare a party. Pierre would invite a few close friends and, on the appointed day, would style his mistress' hair, crowning the finished product with some exotic flower that he had secretly bought. He would set the table, decor-

ate the house, and welcome the visitors at the door, dressed in grand style.

There was one thing he could not bear: "I knew her," he would say, full of life and gayety, richly dressed, and entering into amusements with animation; now the scene was so changed, and it was so sad to me!"³ Pierre's principal biographer wisely reflects: "There was something far beyond the devotion of an affectionate slave; it seemed to partake of a knowledge of the human mind, an intuitive perception of the wants of the soul, which arose from his own finely organized nature." Until the end of his life, he would be his mistress' aide at all times.

With his sweet, helpful and religious soul, he walked the streets of New York, sought after by high society ladies for his hairdressing services. Curiously, it was not uncommon for coiffure to be relegated to second place, as Pierre found himself obliged to devote himself to caring for souls, as he had acquired a reputation as an admirable counsellor. Maria Anna Schuyler, daughter-in-law of General Philip Schuyler, considered Pierre her only confidant and called him "my saint." Many souls benefited from his generous work, his wise words, or his simple presence.

After Mrs. Bérard's death, Pierre's small apartment-office became a shelter for orphans, refugee priests, and workers who had fallen into poverty, for whom he interceded with important people in the city, finding them employment and helping them to organize their lives. He lived to the age of eighty-seven, as a Catholic and persevering recipient of the Sacraments, in an environment that was hostile to the Faith.

Untainted by envy and ignorant of the bitterness of rebellion, Pierre Toussaint displayed, as a lesson for history, the hallmark of a true Catholic: generosity filled with joy. Service ennobled him, and admiration – an act of justice that we joyfully render to all that is superior to us – endowed his soul with delicacy, insight, and good taste. He understood that God loves all men and therefore arranged them in a harmonious scale of perfections, so that each may proceed according to the gift he has received (cf. 1 Pt 4:10-11) and all may be enriched by becoming slaves to one another through charity (cf. Gal 5:13). ✦

¹ LEE, Hannah Farnham Sawyer. *Memoir of Pierre Toussaint, Born a Slave in St. Domingo*. 3.ed. Boston: Crosby, Nichols and Company, 1854, p.15.

² Idem, p.20.

³ Idem, p.25.

Gustavo Kralj



Born to Be Loved by Mary

From the very first moment of the conception of the Word, Our Lady offers Him uninterrupted acts of adoration.

From her Immaculate Heart flows the blood that will constitute His Body; however, what nourishes Him most are the torrents of love for Him that flow from that

same Heart. Mary's role consists in loving Him, adoring Him, and glorifying Him as no other creature ever could. This Child was created in time, in order to be loved, above all, by her.

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