



HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Nº 219 - January 2026



*Faith and Reason,
a Chaste Union*

All Love Him, but in Diverse Ways

Man gives himself wholly by love, and gives himself as much as he loves. He is therefore in a sovereign manner given to God when he loves the divine goodness sovereignly; and having once made this donation of himself, he is to love nothing that can remove his heart from God. Now, never does any love take our heart from God, save that which is contrary unto Him. [...]

In Heaven, Theotimus, God will truly give Himself to us wholly, and not in parts, since He is a whole that has no parts, yet He will give Himself in different ways, and in as many different ways as there are blessed souls. This will so happen because while giving Himself all to all and all to each, He will never give Himself wholly either to one in particular, or to all in general. [...]

All true lovers are equal in this, that all give all their heart to God, and with all their strength, but they are unequal in this, that they give it diversely and in different manners, whence some give all their heart, with all their strength, less perfectly than others. This one gives it all by martyrdom, this, all by virginity, this, all by poverty, this, all by action, this, all by contemplation, this, all by the pastoral office; and whilst all give it all by the observance of the Commandments, yet some give it with less perfection than others.



St. Francis de Sales - Copy of a portrait painted in 1618

So that our love to God, Theotimus, takes its worth from the eminence and excellence of the motive for which, and according to which, we love Him; in that we love Him for His sovereign infinite goodness, as God and because He is God.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.
Treatise on the Love of God. 3.ed.
Rockford IL: TAN, 1997, p.415-417

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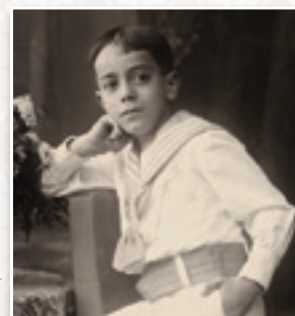
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Send your questions to Fr. Ricardo, by email:
ourreadersask@heralds.org



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

Some say that God punishes, others that God forgives, because He is merciful. How is it possible to understand that the same God is just with some and merciful with others? Is it because people are predestined?

Lucas Ferreira – Rio de Janeiro

For many centuries, theology sought to explain this apparent “tension” between God’s severity and mercy. On the one hand, we see God, offended by sin, immediately inflicting the appropriate punishment on the offender. On other occasions, however, we see the same God displaying an astonishing outpouring of goodness. One need only read the Scriptures to corroborate this reality.

For some, divine justice is manifested above all in the Old Testament, while the New Testament represents a radical turning point in the line of mercy, as attested by certain striking examples, such as the forgiveness granted to the adulterous woman (cf. Jn 8:3-11), Jesus’ dialogue with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:7-26) and, finally, the plea for forgiveness on Golgotha on behalf of those who crucified the Lord (cf. Lk 23:34).

This conception of the opposition between punitive severity and mercy reached the point of absurdity in the Gnostic philosopher Marcion, according to whom there was a complete discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, to the point of considering that different gods were revealed in each of them.

Based on Christian reflection on faith, and especially in the book *Cur Deus Homo?* – Why Did God Become Man? – by St. Anselm, an attempt was made to provide a conciliatory explanation, so to speak, for what was colourfully called the “conflict of the daughters of God,” which would become this apparent tension or even contradiction between the demands of justice and those of mercy within the Trinity itself. The solution found by God to appease justice and, at the same time, pour out His mercy was the Passion of Christ. On the Cross, justice was appeased in the Holy Victim and, through that same Victim, torrents of love and forgiveness poured out on sinners.

However, it is St. Thomas who will fully explain the question (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 21), seeking to reason more from God Himself, in whom all perfections are well unified in the marvellous simplicity of His essence.

To understand the Angelic Doctor’s explanation, it is worth remembering some essential principles of scholastic philosophy, beginning with the fact that God does not love as men do.

Men love what is lovable, what attracts them. No one loves five hundred grams of flour at first sight, but they do love a delicious cake...

Therefore, to obtain man’s affection, something must be good, desirable. God, on the contrary, by loving His creatures, makes them lovable. No one is good unless divine love makes them so (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 20, a. 2). As can easily be seen, this is a very important change of perspective.

Therefore, for St. Thomas, mercy consists in the ability to correct any deficiency and, in this sense, creation and Redemption are radical manifestations of God’s mercy.

On the other hand, for him, the Passion – although in a certain sense it took place to appease justice – constitutes above all a great work of mercy, for through it the Lord reveals to us the extremity of His love.

What, then, would justice be in God?

It manifests itself above all in two aspects. Firstly, in the exact measure with which He distributes graces. He does not make all human beings excellent to the highest degree, but creates an inequality among them, which depends on the love which He bestows on each one: some more, others less, but all with abundant generosity, according to Aquinas.

Secondly, in the punishment of evil. It should be borne in mind that the punishments inflicted on this earth are more merciful than just, for although they are painful, they open hearts to conversion, purify them and elevate them to the consideration of spiritual realities. St. Thomas explains that, when it comes to eternal punishment, God condemns the sinner after he has rejected all resources of mercy. And even in the case of condemnation to hell, He, in His goodness, mitigates the penalties due. ✠

FAITH, REASON AND MENTALITY

The harmony between faith and reason is one of the pivotal elements of Catholic theology. As early as the second century, St. Justin proclaimed that Christianity was “the only safe and profitable philosophy” (*Dialogus cum Tryphone judæo*, c.VIII, n.1), and Clement of Alexandria called the Gospel “the true philosophy” (*Stromata*. L.I, c.18, 90, 1).

St. Thomas Aquinas elaborated the best synopsis of this interrelationship. Without faith, few would attain the knowledge of God, because the purely rational path is arduous and difficult, rarely immune to doubts and even falsehoods. Meanwhile, reason is indispensable for demonstrating the premises of faith, clarifying its truths, and refuting its opponents.

Luther opened a schism not only in the Church, but also in the very union between faith and reason. Deeply anti-Thomistic, for him reason is a “prostitute of the devil” and faith a mere subjective confidence. It would suffice to believe – *sola fides* – to be saved. The Protestant Revolution, by excluding the element of reason from faith, deprived it of its very essence. In fact, faith is a habit of the mind, so that every authentic act of belief is also an intellectual act.

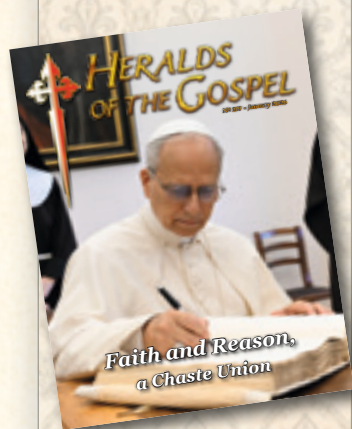
Under the arrogance of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution persecuted the Church and the clergy in order to subvert religiosity into a false worship of the “goddess of reason.” In honour of this deity, represented by a prostitute, blasphemous feasts were held in various cathedrals converted into preposterous “temples of reason”.

The Communist Revolution proclaimed itself omnipotent, while at the same time inserting religion and men of faith into the dialectic of oppressor-oppressed. Ultimately, in the Marxist view, faith, reason and the state would be identified, since the people would need to believe unconditionally in the Leviathan-State that would provide the standard of “reason” for all things.

The 20th century spawned several revolutions, such as the student revolution of May 1968, the tribalist and cultural revolutions of various kinds, all of which had a common denominator: they placed special emphasis on influencing human sensibilities, thus promoting blind faith in irrationality, sometimes under the guise of defending “science” and “enlightenment.”

A genuinely Catholic solution would involve the restoration of authentic harmony between faith and reason. However, it is necessary to go further. Faith is dead if it is not clothed in charity (cf. Jas 2:17), and all wisdom that does not come from above “is earthly, unspiritual, devilish” (Jas 3:15). Therefore, it is also essential to mould our minds in uniformity with the things of Heaven (cf. Col 3:1), where true wisdom resides. In the words of Pope Leo XIV: “Only in a life conformed to the Gospel can we achieve adherence to the divine truth we profess, making our witness and the mission of the Church credible” (*Speech*, 26/11/25).

Faith is merely a foretaste of the beatific vision, in which syllogistic reason will give way to pure intuition of the Holy Trinity. In our homeland, we will contemplate God “as He is” (1 Jn 3:2), through the light of glory – *lumen glorie* – infused into our spirit or, as theologians say, through a loan made to us from divine intelligence itself. There will be no more faith, only intellection resulting from a complete *metanoia*, that is, a radical change of mentality. This will not be produced by revolutions that distort human rationality, but infused by the Holy Spirit. ✠



*Leo XIV on a visit
to the Poor Clare
Monastery of
the Immaculate
Conception in
Albano (Italy), on
15/7/2025*

Photo: Vatican Pool /
Getty Images



“Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord”

God remains a mystery. But a positive mystery, which, from our incipient notions, leads us ever more to successive and endless investigations and discoveries. Our knowledge of God is a window illuminated by an infinite sky.

CONFINED TO THE IMMEDIATE, THE RELATIVE AND THE USEFUL

One of the illusions produced in the course of history was the belief that technical and scientific progress would be able, in an absolute manner, to provide answers and solutions to all humanity's problems. And we see that this is not the case. [...] Even in the epoch of scientific and technological progress — which has given us so much — the human person remains a being who wishes for more, for something more than comfort and well-being; the human being who is open to the whole truth of his or her existence, who cannot stop at material things but opens to a far wider horizon. [...]

The risk is always that of remaining confined to the world of things, of the immediate, the relative, the useful, of losing sensitivity to all that refers to our spiritual dimension. It is by no means a question of contempt for the use of reason or of rejecting scientific progress, far from it. Rather, it is a matter of understanding that each one of us is not only made in a “horizontal” dimension but also has a “vertical” dimension.

BENEDICT XVI.
Speech, 19/6/2011

YEARNING FOR ABSOLUTE TRUTH

No darkness of error or of sin can totally take away from man the light of

God the Creator. In the depths of his heart there always remains a yearning for absolute truth and a thirst to attain full knowledge of it. This is eloquently proved by man's tireless search for knowledge in all fields. It is proved even more by his search for the meaning of life.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Veritatis splendor, 6/8/1993

A WINDOW OPEN ONTO THE INFINITE

A person cannot live without this search for the truth about himself — who am I, what am I living for — a truth that is an incentive to widen his horizon and to go beyond material things, not in order to flee from reality but to live it in an even truer way that is richer in meaning and hope, and not merely superficial. [...]

I invite you to become aware of this healthy and positive restlessness and not to be afraid to ask yourselves the fundamental questions on the meaning and value of life. Do not stop at partial, immediate answers; they are certainly easier and more convenient at the time and can bring a few moments of happiness, exaltation or intoxication but they do not lead you to the true joy of living, the joy that is born, as Jesus said, from those who build on solid rock rather than on sand. Learn how to reflect, how not

to interpret your human experience superficially but rather in depth: you will discover, with wonder and joy, that your heart is a window open onto the infinite!


BENEDICT XVI.
Speech, 19/6/2011

ONLY GOD CAN FILL THE HUMAN HEART

The root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God. For man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved by it [...].

The Church knows that her message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart when she champions the dignity of the human vocation, restoring hope to those who have already despaired of anything higher than their present lot. Far from diminishing man, her message brings to his development light, life and freedom. Apart from this message nothing will avail to fill up the heart of man: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.”

ST. PAUL VI. *Gaudium et spes*.
Second Vatican Council, 7/12/1965



Dawn at the Mar Virado cove,
Ubatuba (Brazil)

WITHOUT HIM, NOTHING MAKES SENSE, NOTHING IS WORTHWHILE

For you – for us – the Lord is everything. He is everything in different ways: as Creator and the source of existence, as love that calls and challenges, as the strength that impels and inspires us to give. Without Him, nothing exists, nothing makes sense, nothing is worthwhile. [...].

In this regard, St. Augustine describes God's presence in his own life using beautiful imagery. He speaks of a light not bound by space, a voice that never fades, food that is not lessened by eating, and a hunger which is never satisfied, and he concludes: "This is what I love when I love my God." These are the words of a mystic, yet they resonate with our own experience. They reveal the longing for infinity that dwells in the hearts of all man and woman.

LEO XIV.
Homily, 9/10/2025

GOD DESIRES TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN

The need for a foundation for personal and communal life becomes all the more pressing at a time when we are faced with the patent inadequacy of perspectives in which the ephemeral is affirmed as a value and the possi-

bility of discovering the real meaning of life is cast into doubt. [...]

As the source of love, God desires to make Himself known; and the knowledge which the human being has of God perfects all that the human mind can know of the meaning of life.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Fides et ratio, 14/9/1998

KNOWLEDGE THAT GIVES MEANING TO ALL THINGS

It is important in our time that we do not forget God, together with all the other kinds of knowledge we have acquired in the meantime, and they are very numerous! They all become problematic, at times dangerous, if the fundamental knowledge that gives meaning and orientation to all things is missing: knowledge of God the Creator. [...]

For us Christians God is no longer a hypothesis, as He was in the philosophy that preceded Christianity, but a reality, for God "lowered the heavens and came down." Heaven is God Himself and He came down among us.

BENEDICT XVI.
General Audience, 11/1/2006

THE LORD IS NEAR!

God remains a mystery. But a positive mystery, which, from our in-

God wants to be known. We must seek Him in the book of creation, in the Word of God, in the Church, in the depths of our own conscience...

cient notions, leads us ever more to successive and endless investigations and discoveries. Our knowledge of God is a window illuminated by the sky, an infinite sky. [...]

We must overcome the temptation, so strong in our days, to consider impossible a knowledge of God that is adequate to our cultural maturity and corresponds to our existential needs and our spiritual duties. That would be indolence, vileness and blindness. We must, rather, seek. Seek in the book of creation; seek in the study of the Word of God; in the school of the Church, Mother and Teacher; in the depths of our own conscience... Seek God, seek Him always. And know this: He is near.

ST. PAUL VI.
General Audience, 22/7/1970



January 1 – Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Mother of the Prince of Peace and Our Mother



✠ Fr. Fernando Néstor Gioia, EP

"I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:10-11). With these words, the Angel of the Lord communicated to the shepherds the fulfillment of the great promise made to Israel, joined by a magnificent chorus of the heavenly hosts to glorify the Most High for the birth of the Redeemer: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased!" (Lk 2:14).

After the Angels had returned to Heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Lk 2:15). There they found Mary and Joseph, and the Child lying in the manger. There could be no poorer dwelling than a cave, nor a more humble cradle than a manger!

St. Luke tells us only that they "they made known the message that had been told them about this Child. All who heard it were amazed" (Lk 2:17-18). But he does not fail to emphasize: "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Lk 2:19).

In that humble grotto, a new relationship between men and with the Creator was inaugurated, which Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira summarized as follows: "Never has a mother's heart loved her Son more tenderly. Conversely, God never loved a mere creature so much. And never has a Son loved His Mother so fully, completely, and superabundantly."¹

The fullness of time had come – as St. Paul declares to the Galatians – in which "God sent His Son, born of a Woman, born under the Law" (Gal 4:4), associating Mary Most Holy with His salvific plan as Mother of the Redeemer.

On this first day of the year, we celebrate the chosen one upon whom God has cast His benevolent gaze: the Mother of God, Mother of the Church, Mother of all men.

In a time when neo-paganism invades the face of the earth and devastating wars, which may reach an unpredictable magnitude, threaten us at every moment, we seek peace. But this will only be authentic and lasting if it is built on the firm rock of Truth, the teachings of the Gospel, and the fulfilment of the Ten Commandments.

As Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP, affirms, "peace lies in men, peoples, and nations placing God in the centre. [...] Peace will only be obtained when Mary is in the centre, for at the centre of her life and thoughts is Jesus!"²

Let us turn our eyes to Mary, Mother of the Prince of Peace and our Mother; may She intercede for us, asking that the humanity of today allow itself to be enlightened by the truth that will set it free (cf. Jn 8:32). ✠



Virgin with Child - Christian Museum, Esztergom (Hungary)

Francisco Lecaros

Nations will only obtain lasting peace when Mary is at the centre of society, for in her is Jesus

¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. "Filho, eis aí tua Mãe". In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XVIII. No. 213 (Dec., 2015), p.5.

² CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Homily*. Mairiporã, 1/1/2008.

When God Calls Us



✠ Fr. Rodrigo Fugiyama, EP

Anyone approaching the city of Cologne, Germany, will soon spot the towers of its cathedral, which seem to defy the winds and storms that have battered them for centuries. Contemplating these towers, we would almost want to ask them: “Who made you so robust and slender? What memorable events have you witnessed? What saints and sinners have you sheltered within your sacred walls?” If they could speak, perhaps they would answer us: “We do indeed have much to tell you, but that would be nothing compared to what Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthasar, who rest inside the cathedral, can tell you. We almost touch the heavens; but they truly touched the King of Heaven Himself! It is to them that you should say: ‘Tell us your story!’”

Perhaps the Three Wise Men would answer our plea with just one sentence: “It is always an adventure to answer God’s call, but it is worth taking the risk!” Indeed, this expressive statement, attributed to St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, could well summarize their lives. Let us analyse the three elements that compose it.

First: God calls. In the case of the kings from the East, this call did not come through the apparition of an Angel or a divine locution, but in a discreet and gentle way: a star appeared in the sky. But for them, everything was said. The Lord wanted them to follow this mysterious star, for it would lead them to the place where another King had been born. How prompt and faithful was the Magi’s response to the divine invitation! They are a perfect model of docility to grace, for they show us how attentive we must be to the signs from above, being

flexible to the plans of the Heavenly Father, even without fully knowing them.

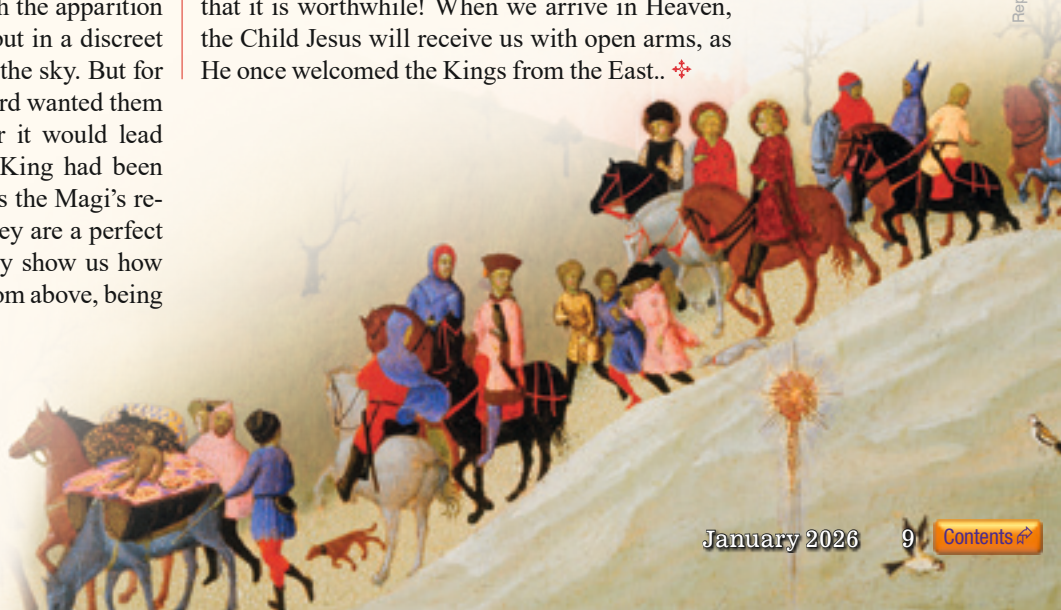
Second: there are risks. Were they aware of the dangers of the journey? Certainly. But no obstacle is insurmountable for those who have become slaves to grace. Neither the hardships of the desert, nor the long caravan journey through dangerous places, nor even the perfidy of Herod or the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes could divert them from the path that would lead to the true King.

Third: it is worth it. When they arrived before the Child Jesus, His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, they could rightfully exclaim: “It was worth it!” What were those dangers, trials and sufferings, as compared with the reward of contemplating God Himself?

On this Solemnity of the Epiphany, the Magi remind us that at certain moments in our lives God calls us as well. This call may require certain renunciations from us and, at the same time, the willingness to embark on a holy adventure. There will be risks, there will be perplexities, there will be suffering. However, when the devil tries to make us give up on our “perilous journey,” let us remember that it is worthwhile! When we arrive in Heaven, the Child Jesus will receive us with open arms, as He once welcomed the Kings from the East.. ✠

*Docility,
renunciation,
and surrender:
this is the
great example
that the Holy
Wise Men
left for all
time, when
they decided
to follow
the star*

“The journey of the Magi Kings”, by
Stefano di Giovanni - Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York



The Importance of Baptism



✠ Fr. José Mauricio Galarza, EP

“Let my child receive Baptism when he wants!” It is not uncommon to find this opinion among families with “Catholic” roots...

This Sunday we recall the magnificent example that Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us when He was baptized by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan River, an event that drew torrents of grace from Heaven for the salvation of countless souls.

Just as the Father proclaimed, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17), we can similarly consider that the same voice is heard in every Baptism.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us: “This Sacrament is also called ‘the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit,’ (Ti 3:5) for it signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one ‘can enter the Kingdom of God’ (Jn 3:5).”¹

Since the Sacrament of Baptism is indispensable for our salvation, this very serious statement

from the Holy Gospel shows us how harmful is the idea that circulates in some Catholic circles: “Let my child receive Baptism whenever he wants!”

Where did this folly come from?

From the world, we could say, through the media and social networks, which, with their maxims and bad habits, are undermining our faith.

To this is added the nefarious influence of intellectuals and teachers who in many places of learning propagate agnostic and materialistic principles, which, when they do not directly attack the Catholic Church, belittle her teachings.

It is worth emphasizing what the Catechism teaches us about this “washing of regeneration”:

“The Lord Himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. He also commands His disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this Sacrament. The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are ‘reborn of water and the Spirit.’”²

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin that Catholic parents, and all those who have the grave responsibility to procure this Sacrament, do so out of love for God and with great zeal for the salvation of souls, setting aside spiritual “convenience”, heterodox ideas, and worldly interests. ✠



João Paulo Rodrigues

Baptism in the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Piraquara (Brazil)

¹ CCC 1215.

² CCC 1257.

The Revelation of the Principal Mysteries of Our Faith

✠ Fr. Ricardo Alberto del Campo, EP



The Beloved Disciple recounts that, upon seeing Jesus approaching, St. John the Baptist said to his disciples, filled with interior joy: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29). And then he declared: “A Man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because He existed before me” (Jn 1:30).

In these words of the Precursor, we see a manifestation of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s divinity because, on the one hand, He comes to forgive sins – and for the Hebrew people of that time it was clear that only God can do this – and, on the other hand, He exists from all eternity, a notion difficult for our chronological mentality to comprehend.

These considerations help us to develop and grow in our faith.

In the subsequent passage, the Baptist reveals to us the mystery of the Blessed Trinity – by which we affirm that there is one God in Three Persons – and that of the Incarnation, the two greatest mysteries of our holy Religion. We do not understand them by simple reason, without the supernatural aid of faith, through which we believe in these sublime truths. If they had not been revealed, we would never come to know them.

Here are the words with which the Gospel of St. John presents this revelation: “the One who sent me to baptize with water [the Father] told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit [the Holy Spirit] come down and remain, He is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ Now I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God [the Son]” (1:33-34).

What a marvel the Precursor witnessed and understood! But this mystery – if we are faithful to God, respond to grace and are saved – we too will be able to contemplate for all eternity.

Among the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, there is a relationship which constitutes the eternal life of God, so extraordinary, elevated and rich that

we cannot even begin to grasp it: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared” (1 Cor 2:9). However, by grace we can participate in this divine life even during our earthly existence, persevering on the path of Faith and in the practice of virtue, until it blossoms in fullness, forever and ever, in Heaven.

The reading of the Gospel of the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time helps us to remember these most eminent mysteries and to raise our souls to them.

Let us strive, during our earthly pilgrimage, to cherish our faith, to live in accordance with it, to duly nourish it with prayer and the Sacraments, so that we may be worthy of eternal blessedness, where we will see the one and triune God face to face. ✠

*Let us
cherish our
faith, so
as to merit
eternal
blessedness
and
contemplate
face to face
the one and
triune God*



The Most Blessed Trinity - Hyacinthe Rigaud Museum of Art, Perpignan (France)

Francisco Lecaros

Light Irrupts into History

✠ Fr. Carlos Javier Werner, EP



The fabric of history, despite all appearances to the contrary, is woven by the most wise and benevolent hands of the Father. Seen as a whole, it splendidly reveals to us the greatness of divine power, which carries out its sublime designs without ever disrespecting the freedom of man, who so often opposes these designs with sin.

The prototypical example of this mysterious and fascinating reality is found in the Incarnation of the Word to redeem mankind. St. Augustine, in his hymn *Exultet*, which the whole Church sings on Holy Saturday, affirms with admirable audacity, referring to Adam's sin: "O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" Faced with the obstacles posed by human rebellion to the realization of divine plans, the wisdom of Him who is infinite and unfailing Light always triumphs with new and greater wonders.

This is what we see happening in Galilee of the Gentiles. The passage from the prophet Isaiah taken from the first reading of this Sunday (cf. Is 8:23–9:3) shows the contrast between darkness and light. As a just Judge, God had humbled the land of Naphtali and Zebulun; they lacked the light of faith, everything was shadow and sadness. However, He resolved to cover the way of the sea with glory: the darkness is driven out by the marvelous Light, which brings perfect life and joy.

This announcement is entirely fulfilled with Jesus' public mission on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, as the Gospel of St. Matthew points out to us (cf. Mt 4:12-23). He was the Light that illuminated the men of that region with His word, say-

ing to them: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (4:17). And, to seal the authenticity of His appeal with supernatural authority, Our Lord multiplied miracles in favour of the sick, those possessed by the devil and those in most need.

Blessed Galilee, first punished, then forgiven and exalted! It passed from darkness to light – and what light! – by the magnificent power of the Almighty.

However, we must ask ourselves: what did Galilee do with this Light of infinite beauty? From initial enthusiasm, it fell into neglect, ending in contempt and hatred. The result? An even more terrible curse: "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to Heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades" (Mt 11:23). What is the reason for such a terrible punishment? The fact that they did not convert.

If we look at the current state of the world, we are dismayed to witness the process of apostasy that is burying the last embers of faith in the once Christian West. Will punishments come? With sadness and apprehension, we must acknowledge that there is a high probability.

However, the powerful and merciful hand of God, which will

cast hardened hearts into the region of darkness, will send to the purified world the splendours of the wondrous Light, causing holy joy to be reborn with new vigour in the remnant that has remain faithful. And, this time, it will do so manifestly through Mary Most Holy, She who, in the words of Pope Benedict XV, "with Christ redeemed mankind."¹ ✠



Detail of "The Final Judgement", by Stefan Lochner - Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne (Germany)

Just as, in His public life, Our Lord burst forth as a saving light amidst the darkness of apostasy, we must trust in His intervention in the dark days we are now living

¹ BENEDICT XV. *Inter sodalicia*: AAS 10 (1918), 182.

WITH MARY, EVERYTHING HAS A SOLUTION

Judas Iscariot had just carried out his nefarious plan. Not even Jesus' merciful warnings could dissuade him from his deicidal infamy, and to the sinister sound of the clinking of his thirty coins, he wandered through the shadows of the night. For a short time, that filthy money would give him some satisfaction...

But Judas was not the only traitor wandering in the darkness.

Our Lord was on His way to Caiaphas' house for the unjust trial that would lead to His death when He spotted one of His disciples, the first of them, Simon Peter, in the crowd. For a moment, their gazes met. At that moment, Peter felt himself guilty of the greatest atrocity he could have committed: having abandoned the Master when He most needed help. He had just denied Him publicly, three times, before a servant girl.

Judas denied Him out of greed; Peter, out of cowardice. "Unfaithful, deceitful, infamous traitor!" the infernal enemy shouted in the consciences of both. He wanted to lead them to an even greater crime.

A greater crime... than betraying the God-Man? Yes.

In an apparition to the Spanish nun Josefa Menéndez at the beginning of the 20th century, the Sacred Heart of Jesus complained precisely about this very grave sin, despair, which necessarily accompanies contempt for divine pardon: "After betraying Me in the Garden of Olives, Judas wandered about as

a fugitive, unable to stifle the cries of his conscience accusing him of the most horrible sacrilege. When he heard the sentence of death pronounced against Me, he fell into the most terrible despair and hanged himself. Who can understand the intense and profound pain of my Heart when I saw that soul, which had spent so many days in the school of my love, plunge into eternal perdition... [...] Judas, why do

of sorrow, a grace moved Peter's soul to true contrition. But, alas! The Master had already been crucified and buried... How could he ask Him for forgiveness? In that moment of anguish, perhaps the first Pope remembered Our Lady and hastened to her.

We can imagine the moving scene. The Blessed Virgin was in the company of St. John when there was a knock at the door. When the door was opened, Simon did not utter a single word. Nor was it necessary, for his tears spoke for themselves. Mary, seeing his sincere repentance, looked at him with unspeakable affection... and She too did not need to say anything. Everything was resolved.

"Contrary to the infamous Judas Iscariot – who hanged himself, begrimed by the mud of betrayal and obstinate pride – Peter experienced the unfathomable abyss of love that burned in the Heart of Mary. And he understood that in any circumstance, whether the state of his soul be good or bad, he would always find an ocean of mercy, goodness and affection there, provided he turned to her with a contrite and humbled spirit."² ✠



"St. Peter weeping before the Virgin", by Guercino - Louvre Museum, Paris

you not come and throw yourself at my feet so that I may forgive you, too? ..."

The distrust of God's mercy wounded Jesus' Heart more than the betrayal for which He suffered all the torments of the Passion! However, Judas voluntarily closed himself off forever to the Master's love, sealing his despair with a horrifying suicide.

While the body of Iscariot hung from a fig tree, another criminal wept over his infidelity. Amid tears

¹ MENÉNDEZ, RSCJ, Josefa. *Apelo ao amor*. 3.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Rio-São Paulo, 1963, p.417.

² CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Mary Most Holy: The Paradise of God Revealed to Men*. Houston: Heralds of the Gospel, 2019, v.II, p.504.



The Study of Catholic Doctrine: an Option or a Duty?

In this life, we always have something new to learn about Catholic doctrine. Above and beyond our daily concerns, our attention and our hearts should be applied to drawing more deeply from it.

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



For centuries, when radar and other sophisticated devices available today did not exist, sailors relied on the stars as their main point of reference. The steersman had to orient himself by the position of the stars to keep the ship on course. Therefore, no one could take the helm and cross seas and oceans – at the mercy of the winds, which were often contrary – without first applying himself to a thorough study of astronomy.

Similarly, there is a fundamental requirement for any responsibility performed in society. A doctor, for example, has the obligation to know how diseases develop, what is the effect caused by viruses, what medicines are appropriate for curing which illnesses, and should further be aware of the discoveries of new substances to aid in the treatment of eventual ailments. If the doctor is remiss in this regard, his knowledge will become obsolete and he may proceed against the duties of his profession.

Similarly, a lawyer who is not interested in the study of law and does

not seek to keep up to date with new or amended legislation will not be prepared to defend the cases he should, and will cease to be a competent professional.

***Our moral obligation
to get to know God better***


Now, much more important than the commitment we make with regards to our profession or role, such as medicine, law or the navy, are our duties to God.

*It is a true moral
obligation to
endeavour to
gradually penetrate
the wonders that
surround the
principal mysteries
of our Faith*

We all began to exist at the moment we were conceived, when the process of gestation began in our mother's womb. However, although our parents were at the origins of the corporal aspect of our being, we know that human conception does not take place solely in this purely natural sphere, but depends on God, who creates the soul, each one unique, and infuses it into the body at that moment.

This reality makes us indebted and obliged to strive increasingly to get to know the Being who created us, redeemed us, and still sustains us and helps us every step of the way! He can give us health, life, and happiness, in addition to all the graces we need!

But unfortunately, even though we are baptized and receive the Sacraments – especially attending Mass and receiving Communion – even though we know that Our Lord came to earth to save us, and we believe that Jesus is the Redeemer of the world, who took away the sins of humanity, we often lack a deeper knowledge of who He is!



It is therefore a moral obligation to endeavour to gradually penetrate the wonders that surround the principal mysteries of our Faith. And since the Church is continually enriched with new perspectives and explanations, it is incumbent upon us to constantly deepen our understanding, which will never be complete, since it concerns an infinite Being.

Even if we lived a billion years, we would be constantly learning, and eternity itself will be a continuous discovery of new aspects of God. For this reason, above the common concerns of life, our attention and our hearts must be applied to drinking deeply from Catholic doctrine and seeking to understand well the laws that govern our relationship with the Creator and the Creator's relationship with us, so that we may turn to the One from whom we came. This is part of sanctity.

The example of the saints

The saints are those whose primary concern is to know more about grace and the supernatural world, and to have a strong and substantial sense of the familiarity that exists between us and God, in order to live it more deeply. This is the axis of the way of thinking of every man who strives for perfection.

St. Odilon of Cluny, for example, who lived in the Middle Ages, had to make long journeys on horseback. One would think that he would spend his free time during those journeys contemplating the scenery and meditating; However, despite the discomforts of horseback riding – especially at a time when pocket books did not exist – he used to read the writings of classical authors, with the aim of expurgating anything that was not useful to the Catholic religion and taking advantage of everything that was useful for teaching others. And sometimes, if

he came across a particularly interesting passage, he would make an effort to memorize it.

Shortly afterwards, we encounter the great St. Thomas Aquinas, who was sent at the age of five to the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino. It is a privileged place, both in terms of its location – as it is situated on an imposing, grandiose and lofty mountain, dominating the surrounding regions – and due to the blessing with which the virtue practised by St. Benedict marked that region.

The family of the Counts of Aquino had settled nearby as feudal lords. At that time, such was the fame of the Benedictine Order that noble families considered that to become an abbot would be an excellent career for one of their sons.

The boy, who had shown a profoundly pious and intellectual bent since childhood, was already a prodigy... Walking around the monastery, he would stop the monks and ask, “Who is God?” The religious replied, “God is an eternal Being.” “God is the omnipotent Being.”

And he, keeping this information in mind, later came to be the extraordinary author of 147 voluminous works, including the famous *Summa Theologiae*, which explain the teachings of Catholic doctrine as no one else had done before.

Thus, we can easily conclude that St. Thomas' life revolved

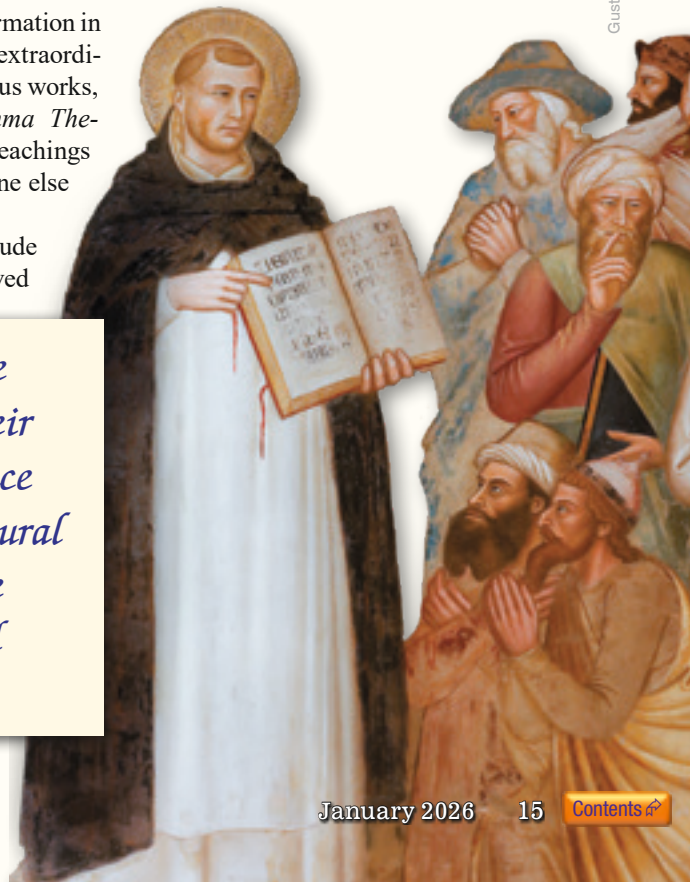
around this single question: who is God?

In the 20th century, Pope St. Pius X used to teach catechism every week to children who were preparing for their First Communion. He affirmed that he needed two hours of prior study in order to give a good class. This is, in fact, his recommendation to parish priests and catechists in the Encyclical *Acerbo nimis*: to prepare themselves through study and serious meditation.¹

Finally, if we examine Dr. Plinio's work closely, we will see that at its core is this search to know who God is and how our relationship with Him should be. That is why, whenever he could, he set aside some time each day for reading. And when, in the last years of his life, he was no longer able to do so because his eyesight had weakened, he asked some of his sons to make a recording of the book read aloud so that he could listen to it.

St. Thomas of Aquinas teaching, by Andrea de Bonaiuto - Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence (Italy); on the previous page, “Reading the Bible”, by Henriette Browne - Private collection

The saints strove to increase in their knowledge of grace and the supernatural world, so as to be closer to God and to teach others



Gustavo Krahl

Grave carelessness in the teaching of doctrine

However, sometimes those responsible for the care of souls do not concern themselves with the religious education of those they direct and even, under the pretext of not wishing to frighten them, silence truths of Faith such as, for example, the notion of sin and the existence of hell.

I was once astonished to read in the famous *Catechism*, compiled by St. Pius X, a very strong warning, stated with great precision: “It certainly is necessary to learn the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ, and those who fail to do so are guilty of a grave breach of duty.”²

And in the very next paragraph there is a statement which is less categorical: “Parents and employers are obliged to see that their children and dependents learn Christian doctrine; and they are guilty before God if they neglect this duty”³

Therefore, if an employer who does not care to give Catholic instruction to his employees in industry or his company incurs sin, how much greater is the responsibility of those who, as re-

ligious superiors and pastors, do not devote themselves to explaining the doctrine to their subordinates and are consciously and voluntarily remiss in their moral formation! Thus, through the negligence of some, a greater number of souls are lost...

Let us recall the episode narrated by Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres, one of the founders of the Conceptionist Order in Quito, Ecuador. As often happens with founders, to whom God usually reveals future events concerning their work, she had a mystical vision in which she contemplated, amid

Those who are responsible for other souls have the obligation to teach them Christian doctrine, and will be blamed before God if they neglect this duty

the eternal torments of hell, many nuns from her convent who had served as novice mistresses during their lifetime. All had committed a single mortal sin: they had neglected their obligation to give their subordinates proper formation.⁴

The benefits of learning more about doctrine

Now, the opposite is also true: every baptized person who strives every day to progress in reading and understanding Catholic doctrine acquires a kind of “varnish” on their soul, easily perceptible in outward signs by an attentive observer. Furthermore, the teaching of this doctrine helps us in the practice of virtue and, as a work of spiritual mercy prescribed by the Church, can be considered a sacramental, through which grace is transmitted.

However, the study of theology can never be independent of the other subjects that make up the “universe” of the Church, restricting itself to only one specific aspect. It is essential to have an overview as a backdrop in order to better understand the parts.

The knowledge of principles and varied speculations full of unresolved hypotheses must be combined with a love for the Sacraments, analysis of Exegesis and History and a perfect understanding of the Liturgy. Everything is harmonized in a colossal, entirely monolithic edifice, which is the Church, from whose supernatural influence the distribution of graces comes.

How to teach doctrine effectively

A question arises here: how to effectively teach a course on Catholic doctrine?

In the early days of Christianity, those who believed in the Holy Trinity and the other articles of the Creed were quickly accepted into the baptismal waters and became members of Christ. Nowadays, with regard to preparation



Msgr. João administers a Catechism class in March of 2002



Magazine Archive

Msgr. João during a homily in April of 2007

for Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation, catechesis must be serious, but it is not appropriate to delay a person's admission into the Church for years. Therefore, once the main truths of the Faith have been discussed and explained, it is appropriate to guide the catechumen directly toward the necessary steps to receive the Sacraments.

But when it comes to providing a solid formation, study should continue until the hour of death. And no matter how well those who teach know Catholic doctrine, they need to make an effort beforehand to become thoroughly familiar with the subject matter through assiduous reading.

It is not a question, therefore, of creating a new doctrine, but of taking what is in the Gospel and transmitting it in a very clear, lively and attractive way, making the subject enjoyable. Each person can make use of the resources and gifts received from God, by being thorough in their descriptions, or by adapting to the students' inclinations to apply what has been read in theory to a specific point, or

In a world that seeks to disfigure the Church's physiognomy, we are called to show the true face of our Mother – holy, dignified and immortal

combating the listeners' indolence by encouraging them to contribute by explaining what they have learned.

Show the world the true face of the Church

There is, however, one essential point in this formation that cannot be emphasised enough: in addition to the knowledge that must be transmitted, it is indispensable to present not only a doctrine, but also a human type, a lifestyle, a way of being. This is what the Angel of the Lord commanded the

Apostles: "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of *this Life*" (Acts 5:20).

Unfortunately, today's generations have little interest in studying the doctrine of the Holy Church, and it is rare to see anyone reading a book of this kind. On the contrary, when considering the situation of humanity in our days, it breaks one's heart to see the existence of a true conspiracy by the international press to dishonour and disfigure our Mother.

In this circumstance, Providence calls us to the supremely beautiful and honourable mission of showing the world the true face of the Church, in all its immortality, dignity and holiness.

Therefore, we must aim at the total formation of man, with a view to establishing models that can give society a true understanding of the Decalogue, of the love of God, of what it means to be a Roman Catholic, and of where the solution to today's problems can be found.

Let us ask Our Lady, in our prayers, for very special graces so that there may be an authentic enthusiasm of the heart – and not only of the intellect – for learning Catholic doctrine, and that this study, carried out with mastery, competence and skill, may bring about the transformation of mentalities, so that earth may draw ever closer to Heaven! ✠

Excerpts from oral expositions given between 2000 and 2007

¹ Cf. ST. PIUS X. *Acerbo nimis*: AAS 37 (1904-1905), 624-625.

² CATECISMO MAIOR DE SÃO PIO X. Rio de Janeiro: Permanência, 2018, p.27.

³ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁴ Cf. PEREIRA, OFM, Manuel Sousa. *Vida admirable de la Madre Mariana de Jesús Torres y Berriochoa*. Quito: Fundación Jesús de la Misericordia, 2008, t.II, p.98-99.

Multiplicity, Hierarchy and Harmony in the Universe

The constant battle between good and evil is reflected in history through the most diverse clashes. The victory of one over the other, however, is decided on the basis of a single principle, often overlooked by the good.



✠ Bruna Piva

History is life's teacher – as the ancients¹ rightly said. Especially if we consider history not as a mere succession of facts, but from a higher perspective, as “the journey of humanity and the entire universe towards the goal for which they were created”² by God.

This journey, from the moment Satan fell from Heaven like lightning (cf. Lk 10:18) and sin entered the world (cf. Rom 5:12), consists essentially of an immense struggle between good and evil. In fact, all the events that have defined the destiny of humanity, on a universal or individual level, have been either triumphs of virtue, in the fulfilment of divine plans, or successes of iniquity, through the perfidy of the devil.

Considering, then, what the wisdom of the past has to teach us from this perspective, we can understand what artifices hell uses to advance its plan of disorder, as well as know the weapons needed by today's militant Catholics who wish to help the Holy Church to build up the Reign of Christ and Mary on earth.

The age-old ploy of the Evil One

Setting out to analyse the centuries that preceded us, let us take as our ini-

tial example the first massive sin committed within the very ranks of Christianity.

Wittenberg, 1517. A preaching friar named Martin Luther, already heavily influenced by spiritual and philosophical currents opposed to Catholicism, was outraged by supposed abuses perpetrated by the Holy Father, and committed his own abuse by nailing ninety-five theses to the door of the city's cathedral attacking the actions and doctrine of the Church. A veritable revolution had been set in motion which, in little more than a hundred years, would end up breaking

forever the union of European nations under the aegis of the Mystical Bride of Christ. Luther was condemned as a heretic; however, with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, Protestantism gained the title of “religion”, with official status.

A later event, with consequences that were more ideological than political, may be equally illuminating. The 18th century is called the “Age of Enlightenment,” of scientific, of great inventions, and of intellectual and material growth. However, so many new developments were hostile towards the Church's mentality from their outset, without the Church having taken any pre-condemnatory stance against them. One would think that, since there is only one God who created both spiritual and physical realities, scientific progress would contribute to the spread and confirmation of religion. But no. Science developed separately from faith. As a result, anti-religious sentiment, scepticism, materialism and, ultimately, declared atheism took root in humanity without major obstacles.

Discord, division, and the conquest of official recognition: this is the age-old strategy used by evil to establish it-

A divider by definition, the infernal enemy knows that the condition for his success lies in dividing the good... Why is the union among them so important?

self in the world. After first separating man from God – through original sin – the devil separated the spiritual from the temporal, the religious from the secular, the nobility from the people, intellectual life from moral life, piety from combativeness; and continues to do the same with countless created splendours, from the metaphysical to the most practical, such as the concept of the union between body and soul that constitutes man.

A divider by definition – for the name *devil* comes from the Greek διάβολος (*diábolos*), which means *one who divides*³ – the infernal enemy knows that the condition for his success lies in the disintegration of good. However, what is the deeper reason for this technique? Why is the union among the good so important that, once broken, it causes their ruin? A look at the theology of creation will shed light on the subject.

Harmony in multiplicity

While there are many realities unimaginable to the limited human mind, few are so in such a special way as the blessed moment when the Divine Architect decided to create all things out

of nothing and begin the work par excellence, whose perfection is merely reflected in the art forms invented by man. The Most Blessed Trinity produced such a great marvel “in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures, *and be represented by them*,”⁴ says St. Thomas Aquinas.

This occurs in two ways. The first happens at the individual level, for each being, however small, reflects God in its own particular manner. But it also reflects God as part of the immense whole of the universe, in which all creatures unite to form a complete representation of the One who made them.

*In the immense
whole of the universe,
all creatures
unite to form
a complete
representation of the
Divine Craftsman*

On this second point, theology explains that divine perfections are infinite and immense, and could not be represented satisfactorily by a single creature. These perfections, therefore, which are *one* in God, are reflected in created beings in multiple and distinct ways,⁵ like a ray of light refracted into the different colours of the rainbow.

Hence, we understand the necessity of unity of beings amongst themselves and with the Creator. In this harmony, they form a great orchestra praising the magnificence of the Most High. Fragmented, they can only produce a cacophony unworthy of divine integrity. And the ancient Serpent, knowing this truth, unable to destroy God in his hatred, seeks to ruin creation, inoculating it with divisive poison at strategic points, and suffocating in it the reflections of the Almighty.

Additionally, even more than simply destroying the divine work, Satan aims to use creatures to build his own kingdom, hell on earth, as a sinister mimicry of the kingdom of holiness that the Saviour came to establish in the world. Such is the insolence of his rebellion against God.



The creation of the universe - Morgan Library & Museum, New York

Reproduction



Mount Shasta (California)

The apex around which everything revolves

On the other hand, triumphantly overcoming the infernal deception, God's plan is realized in history, in all its richness and fullness, by virtue of the Redemption wrought by the Incarnate Word.

Even though the unity of good was jeopardized by the sin of angels and men, Our Lord Jesus Christ restored it forever by His Blood shed on the Cross. Uniting both the human and divine natures within His Person, He reconciled all creatures with God (cf. Col 1:20) and fulfilled the mysterious divine plan of gathering in Himself all things, those in Heaven and those on earth (cf. Eph 1:9-10), as the Apostle affirms.

When speaking of the reconciliation of all beings, St. Paul refers even to the animal, vegetable and mineral natures which, according to his teaching, will at a certain moment receive the effects of redeeming grace:

"The creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:20-21). In the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, "in the [manifestation of] glory of the children of God, all sensible creation will obtain a certain quality of glory, according to

Creation resembles a mountain, in which there is a gradual ascent from the more earthly beings at the base to the most supernatural ones, at the peak

Revelation 21:1: 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth.'"⁶

The Divine Lamb is therefore the centre of the universe, the cornerstone around which everything harmoniously fits together (cf. Eph 2:20-22), and with which *all* beings are linked, in the proportion due to each one.

The Catholic stance par excellence

The preceding considerations make clear to us a fundamental truth that is almost always forgotten or even overlooked: Catholics need to know how to discern and maintain the relationship of all beings with Christ, and in this sense they must be unitive and harmonious par excellence. Not in a promiscuous fashion, embracing truth and

error, virtue and sin equally, but integrally, preserving the *unum* of good from the snares of hell, as St. Paul teaches us once again:

"Do not be mismated with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Cor 6:14).

Naturally, this much-needed Christocentric stance involves a hierarchy, for the arbitrary agglutination of many good things is nothing more than a diversified form of disorder... Speaking to his spiritual children about how the most basic realities grasped by man lead him, gradually and healthily, to higher considerations, Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira⁷ develops a metaphor that fits our case very well.

The unity of creation, he says, resembles a mountain, formed at its base by an interlinking chain of creatures whose connection with God is more rudimentary, since they are more earthly than heavenly; in the middle, progressively, by chains of increasingly higher creatures; and at the top by the most supernatural layer of the universe, which has a close relationship with the Holy Trinity. All of these interlinking chains form a single hierarchically harmonious whole.

Since the adorable Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ is the "peak" of the mountain of creation – and here

we apply the above metaphor – the Christian needs to know how to order his life, and the life of the society in which he is inserted, in a hierarchy of values that has the Redeemer as the rule and measure for everything; that is, always giving precedence to that which has the greatest connection with Him and, ultimately, uniting all things under this rule, in a healthy harmony.

The perfect model of this attitude is the Holy Catholic Church. There is no aspect of human life upon which she has not applied her maternal care, from the highest needs for sanctification to the most poignant miseries to which man is subject. Without being a philanthropic institution, she has always been the refuge and provider of the poor; without being a clinic, she founded hospitals and maintained countless of them; without being an academy, she became the great propagator of universities and educational institutions; And in all this, as an exemplary fulfiller of Christ's mandate (cf. Lk 12:31), she always sought first and foremost to bring souls closer to the Kingdom of God and to His justice, dispensing with the rest as mere additions.

To make these considerations even clearer, let us imagine: what would the world be like if everyone practised the Ten Commandments? What generation of men would be formed if teachers in schools sought to educate not only minds for future professional challenges, but above all souls for the battle of sanctification? What splendour would



"The Ascension", by Jacopo di Cione - National Gallery, London

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the "peak" of the mountain of creation, and Christians must order their lives and their society with Him as the rule

the arts attain if, in addition to delighting the senses, they expressed to the spirits something of the beauty of God? What would architecture be like if, sheltering not just rational beings, but baptized souls, it led them to dignified conduct and their thoughts to heavenly realities?

This would happen if humanity were authentically Roman Catholic, for a soul formed in this way expresses Christianity in everything it does. That supreme and genuine harmony that God had in mind when creating all things from nothing – a harmony for which our soul yearns, often without even realizing it – would be established in the universe.

The reign of peace will be established!

This latent yearning, however, will not vanish into nothingness. The reign of Christian peace is not utopian like the purported victory of evil. On the contrary, through the infinite merits of the Saviour and the intercession of Mary Most Holy, Sovereign Queen of the Universe, it will be established on earth, perhaps in the not-too-distant future.

If, therefore, the devil works diligently, "in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short" (Rv 12:12), let us not be less diligent in building the Kingdom Christ and, as worthy children of harmony, let us fight without ceasing so that God's will may be fulfilled soon and permanently, "on earth as it is in Heaven." ❖

¹ Cf. CICERO, Marcus Tullius. *De oratore*. L.II, n.36.

² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 17/1/1967.

³ Cf. GARCÍA SANTOS, Amador Ángel. *Diccionario del griego bíblico*. Estella: Verbo Divino, 2011, p.198.

⁴ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I, q.47, a.1.

⁵ "Because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided and hence the whole universe together participates the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatever" (Idem, ibidem).

⁶ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Super Epistolam ad Romanos expositio*, c.II, lect.4.

⁷ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 10/1/1981.

Reason in the Cloister

From the chaste union between faith and reason comes wisdom, which is nothing other than a participation in the very knowledge of God.

✠ Valter Gonçalves



At the summit of the firmament, gleaming with particular fervour, the sun scattered its rays over the immense vastness of the desert, traversed by a solitary wayfarer, thirsty and weary. His journey, however, seemed to have finally come to an end. He had just come upon a robust and ancient monastery, whose walls seemed to have withstood the most impetuous onslaughts of men, of time, and of the sun.

Slow and heavy blows made the door tremble and soon open for the traveller. Two gazes met: that of the vigorous newcomer, of tireless, logical, and sen-

sible character; and that of a venerable monk, vivacious, intuitive, and hopeful, whose age could only be perceived by the whiteness of his hair and beard. The visitor showed signs of wanting to enter the cloister.

However, dear reader, before continuing our story, I believe that knowing the names of these two characters will be beneficial to us. The pilgrim is called reason; the monk, faith. The desert is man's life on this earth; the monastery, the Church; and the cloister, Catholic doctrine.

Moreover, it is fitting to ask ourselves two questions. Does the guest –

that is, reason – have any role in Catholic doctrine, or is the cloister a privilege of faith? On the other hand, would not reason, which wanders so freely through the wilderness, be thereby condemning itself to perpetual imprisonment? Let us see.

The role of reason

Reason is the faculty by which man surpasses all other animals in excellence, since only he can know and raise questions as to the nature of things. Questions such as “who am I,” “where do I come from,” and “where am I going” are as old as humanity itself, which continually seeks to unravel the mysteries that surround it.

From this investigation originates science, a set of correct propositions methodically linked together by their causes and principles. What reason is in search of, therefore, is truth.

*In this metaphor,
does the guest
– that is, reason –
have any role in
Catholic doctrine,
or is the cloister a
privilege of faith?*



“Monks in a church in ruins”, by Charles-Caius Renoux -
Fine Arts Museum, Grenoble (France)

But what is truth? It consists, on the one hand, in the correspondence or ad-equation of what is in thought with reality. If, for example, on a day with a clear blue sky someone tells us that it is raining, only out of courtesy will we not call him a liar. Why? Because his thought does not correspond to reality.

Moreover, truth has a transcendental character, since it is founded on the Word of God, who declared: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). All truth originates in the supreme Truth, which is God, as the Eagle of Hippo poetically confesses:

“For where I found truth, there found I my God.”¹

Now, if reason is dedicated to seeking truth, its ultimate purpose can only be to reach the supreme Truth, that is, God. But is reason capable of knowing God on this earth, or will this be possible only in Heaven, where we will see Him as He is (cf. 1 Jn 3:2)?

Faith comes to the aid of reason

We have knowledge of what surrounds us through the five senses: without sight we would not know what colours are, and without touch we could not distinguish between smooth and rough. But the fact that the Almighty escapes the perception of our senses does not prevent us from knowing Him in some way: “Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (Rom 1:20).

Accordingly, even if we cannot know what God is like in Himself, we can at least, by analogy with creatures, know something of His unfathomable perfection, reflected in the order of the universe. The perennity of the mountains gives us an idea of divine eternity, the immensity of the universe reflects His infinitude, the multitude of living beings indicates His superabundant generosity, and so on. Creation,

therefore, postulates the existence of God as a fact proven by reason.

But if we can arrive at the knowledge of God and truth through reason alone, what is the use of faith? There are two classes of truths that the Lord has revealed to us: some are within the reach of reason – for example, the soul and its immortality, the existence of God and His perfection, the necessity of practis-

ing virtue –; others exceed it – such as the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Our Lord Jesus Christ, the world of grace, the future resurrection and angelic beings – requiring the assent of faith.

However, divine goodness has ordained that the former should also be the object of faith. Why? Because, due to their sublimity, few men would be able to reach them through mere reason.

How could those who struggle to earn their bread from the earth and are occupied with a thousand tasks find time to take a course in Philosophy? Moreover, men would easily be influenced by false arguments, which would lead them astray from the truth, were it not already established by faith. Finally, not everyone would be willing to embark on such an investigation, since laziness and disordered passions are not foreign to human nature. Hence, St. Thomas concludes that “If the only way open to us for the knowledge of God were solely that of the reason, the human race would remain in the blackest shadows of ignorance.”²

Besides these truths attainable through the effort of reason, the Creator has also revealed to us, as we have said, others that escape our understanding. The Almighty did this so that we might distance ourselves from presumption, the mother of error. In fact, many people judge as true only what they see, and despise as fantasy everything that they do not grasp through the senses.

Thus, “So that the human mind, therefore, might be freed from this presumption and come to a humble inquiry after truth, it was necessary,” explains the Angelic Doctor, “that some things should be proposed to man by God that would completely surpass his intellect.”³

One last consideration is necessary: since the certainty conferred by faith



Allegory of faith, detail from “Faith, hope and charity”, by Heinrich Maria von Hess - Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Russia)

There are two classes of truths revealed by the Lord: some are within the reach of human reason; others exceed it, requiring the assent of faith



is fully founded on divine authority, its testimony should receive far more credence from us than the claims of reason, even if the latter are more evident to us. Due to the weakness of our intelligence caused by original sin, we often make erroneous and inaccurate judgments, whereas God never errs nor can He deceive us. Therefore, St. Thomas Aquinas⁴ asserts that, without faith, we would live immersed in falsehood.

Reason comes to the aid of faith

We have just stated that faith is based on divine authority. But is not this a conclusion dictated by faith? Are we not we falling into a vicious circle here? Paradoxically, the notion of God's authority and infallibility is given to us by reason itself. Reason proves to us, as we have seen, that God exists and, immediately afterwards, demonstrates that He does not lie. In short, reason grounds certain preambles of faith.

Through it, man can also have a deeper understanding of the truths of faith, using analogies: material light is a shadow of the Eternal Light, the lamb recalls the Crucified One, outer space represents an outline of divine boundlessness.

Finally, reason has an apologetic function, for through it the faithful can oppose those who attack the faith, presenting the falsity of their arguments, as St. Peter advises: "Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pt 3:15).

Alliance and war between faith and reason in history

The relationship between faith and reason, which we have just briefly outlined, has always been the subject of heated discussions throughout the centuries. We could summarize the positions adopted in four categories.

The first encompasses all those who tenaciously neglected the role of faith. Although such people can be identified throughout history, it is worth considering that their number multiplied overwhelmingly from the 16th century onwards, especially with the advent of Modern Philosophy and Humanism.

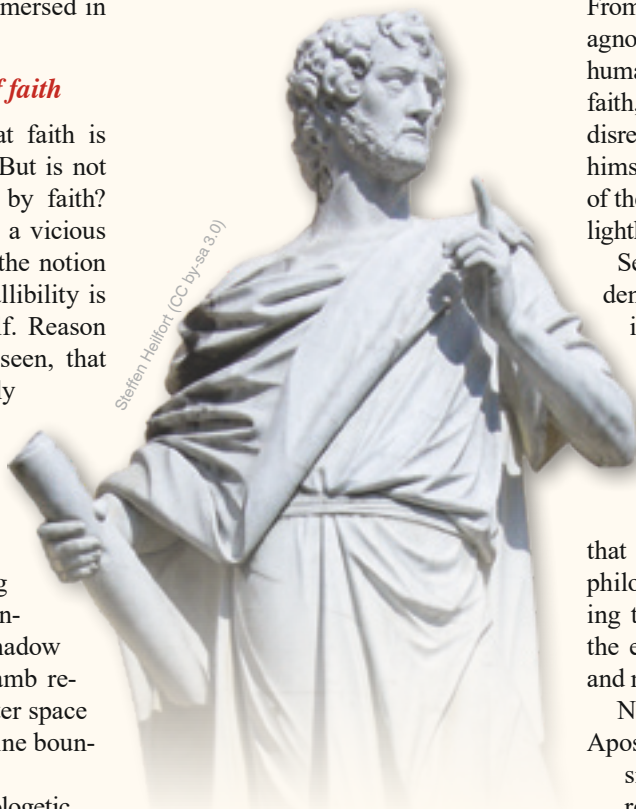
Since then, man has come to occupy the centre of philosophical and scien-

tific investigation, and various thinkers have endeavoured to restrict the limits of human knowledge, as well as its conditions. Thus, "reason, rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being,"⁵ as Pope John Paul II stated. From there would arise all forms of agnosticism and relativism into which humanity is increasingly sinking. With faith, which acts as an aid to reason, disregarded, man immediately finds himself delivered to the vicissitudes of the world, like a ship that, without a lighthouse, is destined for shipwreck.

Secondly, there are those who have denied any credit to reason. Rushing into radical fideism, they dared to affirm: "I believe because it is absurd." Tertullian was undoubtedly one of the main exponents of this thesis, which was erroneously based on the authority of St. Paul: "See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ" (Col 2:8).

Nevertheless, it is clear that the Apostle, in thus warning the Colossians, was not censuring the role of reason, but rather certain esoteric and Gnostic speculations, in which blessedness was promised only through the knowledge of certain truths, reserved for a select few.

In the third group are those who imposed a distance between faith and reason. The disciples of the Arabian philosopher Averroes are especially noteworthy. Fearing to accept the supremacy of philosophical science over faith – as their master had done – they preferred to opt for the theory of "double truth." According to them, faith and reason deal with different truths, disparate from each other. That is, they admitted the possibility of con-



Steffen Heilfort (CC by-sa 3.0)

Allegory of Philosophy - Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg, Potsdam (Germany)

Reason grounds certain preambles of faith, while aiding us in understanding its truths more deeply and in defending them when they are attacked

tradition between them. Faith could, for example, proclaim human freedom and reason could contest it, affirming that free will disappears under the blows of fate.

Finally, the fourth group includes those who safeguarded the harmony between the two. They defended the principle that there can be no conflict between faith and reason, since both are nothing but two channels that lead to the same source: truth. Hence, John Paul II began his encyclical on the subject with these words: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”⁶

This proposal was widely disseminated among the Church Fathers, especially by St. Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and St. Augustine. In addition to these, there were distinguished doctors of Scholasticism who followed the same path: among others, St. Anselm and, above all, St. Thomas Aquinas.

The contribution of these champions of the Church would be summarized in the maxims: “I believe in order to understand” and “I understand in order to believe.” Their main conclusions we have already transcribed above when indicating the aid of faith to reason and vice versa.

A sacred partnership

Having outlined in swift strokes the relationship between faith and reason, the questions from the beginning of the article still stand.

Regarding the first – whether reason has any role in Catholic doctrine – the answer is certainly affirmative: faith, solitary in its cloister, not only can admit the entry of reason, but must receive it; if this were not the case, it would perish for lack of defence, preambles, and development.

And the second question? Is reason not trapped in its enclosure? Quite the contrary: it is through Revelation that infinite spaces for speculation are opened to it.



St. Augustine, by Philippe de Champaigne - Los Angeles County Museum of Art (California)

Reproduction

*Whoever cultivates
the union between
faith and reason will
see everything both in
its concrete, palpable
reality, and in its
most sublime and
supernatural form*

After all, from the chaste nuptials between faith and reason proceeds wisdom, which is nothing other than a participation in the very knowledge of God. He who cultivates this union within himself will tend to see everything at once in its concrete and palpable reality, without dreams or fantasies, and in its most sublime and supernatural form, with an almost irresistible élan for the highest considerations.

Therefore, dear reader, if you aspire to reach that state of mind fit for strength and gentleness, for tranquility and the unexpected, for joy and sadness, for eloquence and silence, in a word, for all ordered opposites, without ever losing the fundamental axis, which is wisdom, always preserve this sacred partnership.

Enlightened reason at the service of faith will ensure that “we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles” (Eph 4:14). ✠

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE. *Confessions*. L.X, c.24, n.35.

² ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa contra gentiles*. L.I, c.4.

³ Idem, c.5.

⁴ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Super De Trinitate*, q.3, a.1.

⁵ ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Fides et ratio*, n.5.

⁶ Idem, n.1.



Reasoning Based on the Principles of the Faith

Combining faith with common sense and a fondness for reasoning, Dr. Plinio became accustomed, from boyhood, to considering questions relating to the Church or Catholic doctrine in such a way as to intuit the solution even before it became explicit.

✠ Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

I have a vague idea of my earliest reasonings. I don't even remember what topics they dealt with, but I do remember that, at a certain point, I became aware of some logical demonstrations. I can imagine how incipient those demonstrations must have been: one fact, another, yet another; then, the conclusion.

At a certain point, I had the following thought: "It is curious how this works! And it matches what I am seeing. Oh, how wonderful!" I remember being literally enchanted when I realized the existence of reasoning and a process by which I could test, use and discover other truths that I did not know. This is natural, since man is a rational animal.

When this became clear to me, I had a fabulous appreciation for reasoning, which came from two impressions. The first was that of a broadening horizon. The second, characteristic of man, was an appreciation for my own dexterity, for perceiving in myself the power of reasoning, which led me to exclaim: "How wonderful, I am rational!"

I am sure that this happens to everyone, and I am not presenting it in any way as an exceptional fact, nor as a manifestation of talent or virtue greater than that of another. However, not ev-

eryone makes the right choice, nor do they pay attention to reasoning.

*The track for reasoning
is common sense*

When I began to pay attention to reasoning and to practise reasoning, I was, as I said, enthralled. But I couldn't help

asking myself the following question: "How many convictions do I have in my soul which have not been reasoned out? Are they really true? Because if truth is attained through sound reasoning, all certainty must be preceded by reasoning. My soul is full of certainties; where is the rationale?"

I remember thinking literally this, and coming to the following conclusion: "I already have so many certainties that, if I were to reason everything out, I would spend the rest of my life confirming what I already know. This way of proceeding seems very logical, but there is something broken about it. Something emerges that I can identify: it goes against common sense.

"Ah, so there is such a thing as common sense, which reasoning does not always obey! Be careful with reasoning... It is magnificent, but it could be compared to an automobile or, less prosaically, to horses running on a track. Going off the track leads to disaster!

The track for reasoning is common sense. There is some kind of basis in a person that, when logic gallops and kicks common sense, logic must be reined in. There can be no conflict between reasoning and common sense, but until the conflict is resolved, common sense prevails. Reasoning that



**"I remember being literally
enchanted when I realized the
existence of reasoning"**

Plinio at 2 years of age

Reproduced

kicks common sense is not acceptable!”

What is common sense? It is a question I asked myself.

The answer was: “I don’t know yet, but it is something that exists within me. If I accept any stab from reasoning in this common sense, I bleed. On the contrary, I know that if reasoning flourishes in line with common sense, I walk in accordance with order and harmony.”

This is where the Catholic Church comes in.

Faith, common sense, reasoning

My parents enrolled me at St. Louis School,¹ and there I began to take methodical classes in religion. In addition, the priests addressed this topic in various subjects, with incomparable Jesuitical logic. This gave me the impression that I had found not just a school of logic, but the school of logic.

Since I saw them reasoning – and they all had the same logic – I said to myself: “No matter how mature I may be in the future and no matter how much I may study, I am sure that I will not acquire any more logic than this. Now, the logic of these priests never conflicts with my common sense; on the contrary, when they reason, I feel that my common sense is at ease and rejoices.

“On the other hand, their logic sharpens mine. Seeing them reason, I know how to set my mind to reason in such a way that it is like a new light entering me. What is this? I realise that they justify the Catholic Faith.”

So there is a triad: Catholic Faith, common sense and logic.

Dew descending from Heaven

Every time I reasoned based on the principles of faith – everything the Church teaches about God, about itself, about its history; the narratives of Bible History and the Gospels; the points of doctrine that were being transmitted to me, such as the Sacra-



Jeff Griffith / Unsplash

Reasoning could be compared to horses running on a track, which is good sense; going off the track leads to disaster!

Horse race in Tampa (Florida)

ments – I felt my common sense rejoicing. And I would think: “How my common sense is elevated! These principles are like dew falling from heaven on the vegetation. What a wonderful thing, one could not imagine anything like it!”

This was true of everything; even the points that I saw the atheists in my circle attack the most. For example, about the Real Presence they said: “How can a man fit into a piece of bread? And especially a man who died two thousand years ago... Bread is bread, and a man is a man! I cannot believe that. I am a strong-minded person.”

And I reasoned: “If someone said he was bread, I would say he was crazy. Our Lord Jesus Christ says He is bread, and I exclaim: He is God! How great is His holiness, His wisdom! Not only I, a boy, but no man could invent a person like Our Lord Jesus Christ; He is above any human conception. This Man cannot be invented, He cannot be the object of anyone’s literary creation. He is the Creator made man. And from this comes such power: when He says ‘This bread is my Flesh’, it is. And I, instead of saying ‘madman!’, bend my knees and kiss the ground.

“This individual claims to be strong-minded; but he is an imbecile! I know exactly where his ‘strong mind’ comes

from. If only God would exempt him – which God would never do, by the way – from practising two Commandments that I could mention, he would believe too; he is a rebel, and a not strong person. He is an atheist because he is revolted. I have nothing in common with him!”

Joy of soul upon glimpsing the solution

I thought a lot about everything related to the Church, observing and analysing. It wasn’t so much about reading. I have read a lot, but I have never been, principally, a reader. I have always been very observant and fond of reflection; and, based on my observations and reflections, I would then read.

And I noticed that the combination of reasoning and common sense, when applied to faith, had a curious result: often, when I posed a problem to myself concerning the Church or Catholic doctrine, before I knew how to solve it, I already perceived what the solution was.

Through my union with the Church, a kind of complementary and superior common sense had formed in me, which was the Catholic sense. So that even before I knew what the Church taught and how it resolved a certain moral problem, or explained a certain



Man, putting the knowledge he has through faith together with what he possesses through reason, can, with the complete development of his good sense, form a magnificent treasure of certainties

Miller's stone lookout - Dolní Zálezly (Czech Republic)

movement in history or circumstance in life, before reasoning to connect one point to the other, before looking for a book to research, in the vast majority of cases – not always – I could already foresee the solution. And the solution brought extraordinary joy to my soul.

Catholic sense

Then something was born in me, the definition of which I came to know later: Catholic sense. It is this common sense regarding matters of faith that flies ahead of reasoning, which reverently travels like a wayfarer with his staff touching the earth, following the path that the bird travelled, flying in the sky. Common sense sets out the various links, the different elements, for reasoning to walk to the end.

Endowed with Catholic sense and understanding that it was a favour, a kindness from Our Lady, I headed towards the formation of my mentality, which then unfolded throughout my life.

This position had to bring about this result: as I got to know the Church and analysed it, I marvelled at it more and more.

One cannot be entirely certain without the Catholic Faith

With what certainty I have spoken about common sense and reasoning! But I realise that I would not have the personality or strength to acquire all

these certainties if it were not for the Faith.

And not just any Faith. The Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church is the one and only, and outside of it, no other deserves the name of Faith. Believing in this infallibility, all treasures are opened to me; losing it, my certainties soften, my common sense becomes gelatinous, and I am nothing.

I have just said that man, taking the knowledge he has through Faith and combining it with what he possesses through reason, can, with complete respect for and development of his common sense, form a magnificent treasure of certainties. But without God's grace, he cannot achieve this. He may be certain about one thing or another – like a scientist who has discovered a chemical reaction – but these would be fragmentary certainties. And pieces of certainty do not form a certainty, just as shards of glass do not constitute a stained-glass window. Certainty belongs to the set of truths that concern man, God, and the universe. This is certainty! It is in this sense that scientific and other certainties fit together and are ordered. But one cannot have complete or adequate certainty without the holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Faith.

Faith broadens horizons and orders thought

It is true that human reason, without recourse to Revelation, discovers on

its own many truths that are also contained in Revelation, such as, for example, the unicity of God or the demonstration that the Commandments of the Decalogue are just.

But without God's grace, man would not be able to maintain a clear notion of the Ten Commandments for long, nor would he be able to practise them consistently, even though he might know them.

St. Paul shows that we participate in the divine nature (cf. Rom 8:16-17); something of God's own life dwells in us. Through the light and strength that come from grace, our intelligence and will can believe, know, and practise respectively what they should. With grace, our intelligence is enlarged and comes to know truths that man would never have known, even before original sin, if it were not for Revelation.

The source of grace is the Catholic Church, and the head of the Catholic Church is the Pope, the pontifical infallibility. Here we have the order, the fervour of soul with which we Catholics must live. ✚

Taken, with adaptations
to written language, from:
Conference. São Paulo, 17/10/1981

¹ School run by the Jesuit priests in São Paulo.



The Holy Fire of Mary's Faith

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§149 Throughout her life and until her last ordeal when Jesus her Son died on the Cross, Mary's faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfilment of God's word. And so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith.

One of the most beautiful and symbolic moments of Holy Saturday occurs while, in darkness and silence, the faithful await the beginning of the celebration. The lights that usually illuminate the temple seem to have succumbed, overcome by dense shadows. A single light remains undefeated: the embers of the holy fire. Soon, the ceremony will begin and the Paschal Candle will be lit, transmitting the *lumen Christi* to the entire church.

If the symbolism of this fire that conquers darkness is beautiful, how much more so is that of another "fire" it represents!

We read in the Holy Gospels that, while Jesus was on the Cross, from the sixth hour until the ninth hour, the whole earth was covered in darkness (cf. Mt 27:45). This is physical darkness, no doubt, but even more so spiritual, for the light of faith fades in the hearts of the disciples and the Holy Women. However, as Dr. Plinio reflects, "there is one lamp which does not go out, or even flicker, and which burns fully alone in this universal darkness. It is Our Lady, in whose soul faith shines as intensely as ever. She believes. She believes entirely, without reservations or restrictions. Everything seems to have failed. But She knows that nothing has failed. In peace, She awaits the Resurrection. Our Lady summed up and epitomized the Holy Church in those days of such widespread desertion."¹

What was Mary's faith like? We can affirm, with St. Louis Grignion de Montfort, that it was greater than "the faith of all the patriarchs, prophets, Apostles and all the saints."² Therefore, it is the greatest faith that has ever existed in history. How can this be explained?

Faith is a supernatural infused virtue, by which we firmly assent to revealed truths, supported by the authority or testimony of God. Now, Christ Our Lord, being the Second Person of the Holy Trinity and His Soul being in the beatific vision, even in His human nature already saw these truths revealed in His own divine essence and, therefore, did not and could not have faith. It is in this sense that the Blessed Virgin constitutes the highest and most sublime model of faith that has ever existed.³

Mary's faith was subjected to a triple test: that of the invisible, that of the incomprehensible, and that of contrary appearances. And She overcame them in a truly heroic manner, for "She saw her Son in the stable in Bethlehem and believed that He was the Creator of the world. She saw Him flee from Herod and did not cease to believe that He was the King of kings. She saw Him born in time and believed that He was eternal. [...] She saw Him, finally,

mistreated and crucified, dying on the most ignominious scaffold, and She always believed in His divinity."⁴

Indeed, there has never been and never will be on earth a faith like Mary's! ✠

¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Via-Sacra. XIV Estação. In: *Legionário*. São Paulo. Ano XVI. N.558 (18 abr., 1943), p.5.

² ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, n.214.

³ Cf. ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *La Virgen María*. Madrid: BAC, 1996, p.274.

⁴ ROSCHINI, OSM, Gabriel. *Instruções marianas*. São Paulo: Paulinas: 1960, p.162.



"There is one lamp which does not go out, or even flicker, and which burns fully alone in this universal darkness. It is Our Lady"

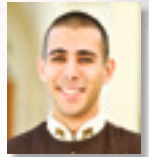
Our Lady of the Resurrection -
Tabor Formation House, Caieiras (Brazil)



Looking to the Heavens, in Search of God

The more we explore the universe, the more evident man's littleness and ignorance becomes. Even after so many centuries of research, many phenomena remain that science cannot explain.

✠ **Marco Antonio Rosseto**



Anxiety gripped the NASA operations control room. For the first time, man was about to orbit the Moon! Were the calculations accurate? Had the spacecraft correctly entered lunar orbit, or was it irretrievably lost in space? At this point, it was out of communication behind the rocky satellite, and only after about fifty agonizing minutes would the operators hear the crew's voices again.

Finally, they managed to re-establish contact. To everyone's relief, the astronauts were safe and sound.

The day's emotions, however, were not yet over. At the end of that Christmas Eve of 1968, William Anders, one of the members of the mission, contacted NASA headquarters in Houston: "We are now approaching lunar dawn and the Apollo 8 crew would like to send you a message." Silence reigned in the room.

Moments later, the radios relayed the astronaut's voice: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the

face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Gn 1:1-2). As the first chapter of Genesis was being read, several people in the control room could not contain their emotion. Scientists and astronomers could hardly believe what they were hearing.

The Apollo missions continued and, the following year, would carry man to the Moon. A milestone would be etched in the history of humanity, a huge goal achieved.

These and other similar facts may raise a reasonable question for us: what is the force responsible for impelling human beings to expend such great effort? After all, does an immense heap



Silence reigned in the room as the radio transmitted the astronaut's message: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..."

The NASA operations control room at the moment when the crew of Apollo 8 witnessed the lunar dawn; inset, photograph taken from the spaceship



Photos: Reproduction

of scientific data justify the incalculable project taking people into outer space?

In reality, human beings seem to hold within themselves a continuous and intriguing doubt, which presents itself each time they raise their eyes to contemplate a starry sky...

Questions that have accompanied humanity

Since ancient times, humanity has debated the origin of the stars, the forces that move them, and the laws to which they are subject.

In Ancient Greece, we encounter a vast array of philosophical theories that sought answers to these questions in a variety of ways. Aristotle, the celebrated thinker of the 4th century BC, stated that men, “then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters, e.g. about the phenomena of the moon and those of the sun and of the stars, and about the genesis of the universe.”¹

With the primitive resources then available to scholars, mythology ended up being, in most cases, the most viable solution to explain such intricate questions.

But centuries passed and science progressed. As a result, new techniques for observing the stars emerged. It is clear that progress was slow: the telescope, one of the main ways of collecting astronomical information, only emerged in 1609, with Galileo Galilei.² Even if it was a simple telescope, it was an indispensable step.

However, there was a major obstacle: the difficulties in archiving the



The centuries passed, science has advanced, and the investigation concerning the origin of the universe remains

Galileo Galilei shows the Doge of Venice how to use the telescope”, by Giuseppe Bertini - Villa Andrea Ponti, Varese (Italy)

information obtained by dint of such arduous efforts. Galileo and his contemporaries first recorded their observations in simple sketches, but reproducing the results of a study at astronomical distances on an exact scale was never an easy task. This decidedly unreliable method would persist for about two more centuries.

Only with the advent of photography was Astronomy able to advance by leaps and bounds.

From the invention of photography to the present day

In 1840, the American chemist John William Draper obtained the first successful photograph of the Moon. Forty years later, his son, Henry Draper, recorded an image of the Orion Nebula.³ Space studies gradually began to show surprising precision.

As science developed, new elements were added to its arsenal. Technological evolution allowed for a dizzying improvement in telescopes, to the point that it is now possible to determine the dimensions, distance, temperature, and composition of celestial bodies, as well as to analyse the various ranges of the electromagnetic spectrum. Meaning that, in addition to the small portion of light visible to the human eye, frequencies of radio waves, microwaves, infrared and ultraviolet radiation, X-rays, and gamma rays are also captured.⁴

With the appearance of so many unprecedented images at the beginning of the 20th century, a controversial theory about the origin of the universe acquired more grounded arguments.

At the origin of the universe

Although it is a subject as widely publicized as it is debated, few know how to explain what the Big Bang theory really states.

The term was used pejoratively in a BBC radio program entitled *The Nature of Things*, by Sir Fred Hoyle, a British astronomer opposed to this theory, in 1949. Since then, the nickname has been used when referring to the theory of the expanding universe.

This scientific thesis sought to explain the beginning of the universe, that is, the appearance, at a specific moment, of all existing matter and energy. It was outlined in the first decades of the last century, based on a series of discoveries, including: Albert Einstein's theory of relativity; Alexan-

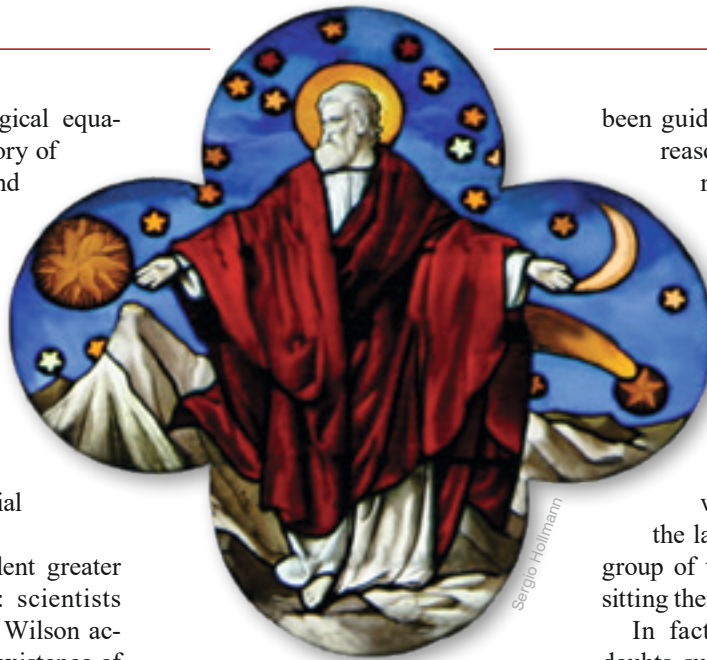
der Friedmann's cosmological equations, which apply the theory of relativity to cosmology; and the explanation, by Monsignor Georges Lemaître, that the redshift of the spectrum of nebulae is due to the expansion of the universe. In 1931, this Catholic priest was the first to propose that the universe began with the explosion of a primordial atom.⁵

In 1965, another fact lent greater credibility to the thesis: scientists Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson accidentally discovered the existence of radiation coming from all directions of the sky. This was the cosmic microwave background, the oldest radiation in the universe, distributed throughout it with astonishing regularity.⁶ Now, this universal distribution of a common energy is seen as a residue of the radiation emitted in an initial explosion, the "leftover" radiation from the Big Bang itself.

There are also a series of physical laws and mathematical calculations that corroborate this theory, so that it appears today as a scientific paradigm regarding the origin of the universe. This, nevertheless remains a mystery, and its true perspective remains beyond our reach.

A divine mystery

The more we explore the universe, the more evident our smallness and ignorance become. Even after so many centuries of research and with



Science can take us very far, but our aspirations will only be satisfied by the Creator

The creation of the stars - Cathedral of Bayonne, France

the incredible technological advances of our time, many phenomena remain that science cannot explain. It can take us far, but our aspirations still demand something more. The truth is that we will never be satisfied just by going "far"; what we really want is to understand the first principles and causes of the realities that surround us. Deep down, we want to embrace the infinite.

This dramatic reality was very well expressed by the scientist Robert Jastrow, founder and director of NASA's *Goddard Institute for Space Studies*: "Currently, it seems that science will never be able to lift the veil that covers the mystery of creation. For the scientist who throughout his life has

been guided by faith in the power of reason, this story ends like a nightmare."⁷

However, open to the truth of God's existence, the perplexed scientist can find the appropriate answer to his questions: "He has climbed the mountains of ignorance and is about to conquer the highest peak; when he manages to reach the last rock, he is received by a group of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."⁸

In fact, the only answer to the doubts surrounding the mysteries of creation is found in the Creator himself, for, as Benedict XVI recalled, "It is not the elemental spirits of the universe, the laws of matter, which ultimately govern the world and mankind, but a personal God governs the stars, that is, the universe [...] above everything, there is a personal will, there is a Spirit who in Jesus has revealed Himself as Love."⁹

Dear reader, the study of the stars is above all an invitation to love with greater intensity the One who arranged everything with perfect order and majestic harmony. If, in contemplating the beauties of the universe, we know how to ascend to the Supreme Craftsman who created them, we will never be faced with the rebuke contained in the Book of Wisdom: "for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?" (13:9). ✧

¹ ARISTOTLE. *Metaphysics*. São Paulo: Loyola, 2002, p.11.

² Cf. RECTOR, Travis Arthur; ARCAND, Kimberly; WATZKE, Megan. *Coloring the Universe. An Insider's Look at Making Spectacular Images of*

Space. Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 2015, p.52.

³ Cf. Idem, *ibidem*.

⁴ Cf. Idem, p.148.

⁵ Cf. CABALLERO BAZA, EP, Eduardo Miguel. *La teología dell'interpretare il Big Bang secondo l'approccio del Prof.*

Paul Haffner. Dissertação de Licenciatura em Teologia – Pontificia Università Gregoriana: Roma, 2009, p.37.

⁶ Cf. CABALLERO BAZA, op. cit., p.38-39.

⁷ JASTROW, Robert. *God and the Astronomers*. New York-

London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978, p.116.

⁸ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁹ BENEDICT XVI. *Spe salvi*, n.5.

...that we owe many scientific advances to the Society of Jesus?

Intrepid missionaries, eminent theologians, and skilled diplomats: with the founding of his work, St. Ignatius of Loyola provided the Church with a truly elite squadron, teeming with saints! Moreover, the history of the Society of Jesus is pervaded by remarkable scientists. It would be too lengthy to name them all, as well as their respective contributions in the most varied areas of the scientific field. We will, therefore, mention only a few.

In the field of astronomy, Father Christopher Clavius (1538-1612), director of the commission that developed the Gregorian calendar – still in use today – and Father Niccolò Zucchi (1586-1670), to whom the invention and construction of the first reflecting telescope is attributed, stand out.

Also noteworthy are Father Giovanni Battista Riccoli (1598-1671), the first scholar to determine the acceleration index of a body in free fall, and Father Francesco Maria Grimaldi (1613-1663), Isaac Newton's precursor in the study of light diffraction. Together, the two managed to make a detailed map of the lunar topography. An interesting fact to highlight is that at least thirty-five lunar craters are named after Jesuit astronomers and mathematicians...

Others, such as Fathers Ruđer Bošković (1711-1787) and Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), although they played a significant role as astronomers, shone especially in other disciplines: the former is known as the creator of atomic physics, while the latter is called the father of Egyptology, due



Reproduction

Jesuit astronomer with the Chinese Kangxi Emperor - Getty Center, Los Angeles

to the initial impetus they gave to these sciences. For the same reason, seismology, that is, the study of earthquakes and the earth's internal structure, became known in certain circles as the Jesuit science. ✧

...that Lourdes has an owner?

Anyone who has visited the town of Lourdes in France will certainly have had their attention drawn to a medieval castle that dominates the entire region. However, few are familiar with its history and its feudal lady. This lady conquered it from a pagan named Mirat in the early 9th century, with the help of a virtuous bishop and a great emperor.

Charlemagne was with his army in the County of Horre. He had already besieged several citadels, whose feeble attempts at resistance did little or nothing against his implacable assaults. The only stronghold that still held out against an endless siege was Mirambel, because, in addition to being in a strategic location, it belonged to Mirat, an experienced and valiant warrior.

The emperor was about to lift the siege, considering it useless, but the Bishop of Puy-en-Velay intervened,



Château Fort de Lourdes (France)

saying he would convince Mirat to surrender the fortress.

With Charlemagne's consent, the bishop set out as an ambassador to begin negotiations. After lengthy discussions, the hardened heart of the pagan warrior began to soften, and the prelate

then made the proposal he had wanted to present from the beginning:

"Since you do not want to surrender your castle to the emperor, surrender it to a Lady who is incomparably superior and more generous, the Queen of Heaven and Earth, Mary Most Holy, Lady of Puy!"

Mirat, taken by grace, agreed and asked for Baptism, which soon took place in the cathedral of Puy. On the same occasion, he was knighted and chose the name Lorus, which later gave the name Lourdes to his fiefdom, or rather, to that of Our Lady.

From then on, until the French Revolution, all the counts of Horre paid an annual tribute to Mary Most Holy in the same cathedral.

So, when Our Lady revealed herself as the Immaculate Conception, She deigned to do so in a place where She was officially the feudal Lady! ✧

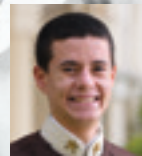


And Science Bowed Before Faith...

Many use science imagining they can prove that God does not exist. The renowned physician Francis Collins, however, defends the scientific validity of his faith.



✠ João Paulo Bueno



The universe holds countless mysteries that make the human heart wonder. From the largest stars to the tiniest grains of sand, everything contains mysteries and complexities so harmonious that there is no way to avoid the questions: “How is it possible for this to exist in this way? Is there a mind behind such order?” The desire to know the truth leads us, then, to delve into the enigmas that each part of the universe encloses.

However, there are many scholars who use their knowledge to try to deny the existence of the Creator and who seek to unravel such enigmas solely through secondary causes, doing everything possible to avoid the ultimate and definitive conclusion: at the origin of everything is God.

But fortunately, they do not represent the totality of scientists. Among those who break the rule, Francis Collins stands out, a great exponent in biochemistry and director of the international study commission *Human Genome Project*. Not content with having faith, he strives to proclaim it at the top of his lungs. He is the author of works that seek to base Christianity on data obtained through his studies and personal experience.

Some might think this is just another Catholic who became a scientist,

and used his knowledge to consolidate his faith; in reality, however, his story is quite different.

Beginnings unrelated to Faith

Born in 1950, Francis Collins had a childhood not unlike that of other young Americans of his time.

A farm in Virginia, and an environment devoid of religion was the setting for his birth and childhood. From his early youth, he showed a fascination for science. He was enchanted by the possibility of understanding the atoms and molecules that constitute beings and had no other project for his life than to dedicate it to the study of the universe through Chemistry. But Divine Providence assigned him a role far superior to what he was able to imagine.

At the age of sixteen, he entered the University of Virginia to study his favourite subject and pursue a scientific career. As a young freshman, he was enthusiastic about the burning issues that ricocheted among the students, which, naturally, also converged on the problem of God's existence.

Having a very limited spirituality, he was easily swept away by the arguments of atheist classmates.

At that point in his life, he became convinced that, although religions

had played a significant role in the formation of cultures, they did not actually uphold a fundamental truth.

For this reason, he began to declare himself an agnostic, a term used to indicate someone who simply does not know whether God exists or not.

Thus, a series of prejudices regarding Christianity gradually formed in his mind.

From agnosticism to atheism

After graduating in Chemistry, he earned a doctorate in Physical Chemistry from Yale University when he was just twenty-two years of age. Francis Collins became increasingly certain that the universe could be explained solely by means of equations and the principles of physics.

Thus, he gradually abandoned his agnostic position to embark on the path of staunch atheism: “I felt quite comfortable challenging the spiritual beliefs of anyone who mentioned them in my presence, and discounted such perspectives as sentimentality and outmoded superstition”.¹

However, his militant stance towards religion was not simply the result of reasoning. Collins confesses that atheism, at its core, was the result of a justification for his moral actions, an attitude he later described

as “wilful blindness.” Belief in God demanded a change of customs that he was unwilling to accept.

After completing his doctoral studies, Francis realized that his studies and theses on thermodynamics – an area which, in his view, no longer offered significant new advancements – would lead him down a path he dreaded: that of a university professor dedicated solely to lecturing to bored students. This fear prompted him to enrol in a Biochemistry course, a field with more potential for development.

Suffering opens his eyes

Shortly before completing his doctorate, he applied to be admitted to the Medical College of North Carolina.

In his third year of study, he had the opportunity to come into contact with the reality of a hospital and gain intense experiences in interacting with patients. There, he took the first step towards a turning point in his life.

When the sick faced suffering and the imminence of death, that reserve that normally prevents strangers from exchanging intimate feelings often disappeared. Medical students ended up becoming the most assiduous confidants – or even faithful friends – of the sick and dying, who no longer had any reason to hide their thoughts about life.

The young intern Francis Collins was amazed to see the spirituality of most of the sick.

He witnessed moments in which faith provided them with a definitive serenity, despite their suffering, and he was surprised that none of his patients rebelled against God or demanded that their families cease all their “talk” about supernatural power and divine benevolence. These observations led him to conclude that, if faith was nothing more than a psychological crutch, it might at least be quite a powerful one.

This was his first step towards definitive conversion.

A scientist who does not consider the data?

Thoughts of this kind began to dominate his mind, leaving him in an awkward situation.

This confusion reached its peak when he came into contact with an elderly lady who was suffering from acute pain with no prospect of relief. She asked him what he believed in. Collins felt himself blush at the question and stammered, embarrassed: “I’m not really sure.”

Those brief seconds of conversation tormented him for several days. He realized that he had never seriously considered the evidence for and against belief: “Did I not consider myself a scientist? Does a scientist draw conclusions without considering the data?”²

Suddenly, all his arguments for denying the existence of God seemed

too weak in the face of the religious convictions of a lady who had probably never studied her belief in depth, but who possessed the most important thing of all: faith.

From then on, Francis Collins had no other interest than to analyse the various creeds and seek the one that possessed the greatest plausibility. He began reading short summaries of all sorts of religions, but none of them seemed coherent to him.

In search of the plausibility of the Faith

Collins found no better way to overcome this difficulty than to consult a Protestant pastor who lived next door to him. He presented his situation and asked if there was any reasonableness in the Christian belief. His interlocutor took a book from his personal library and handed it to him, recommending that he read it.

It was *Mere Christianity*, a book by an Oxford professor, Clive Staple Lewis, dedicated to presenting very convincing arguments in favour of Christianity. It is curious to note that, despite being written by an Anglican, the book ended up leading Francis Collins into the bosom of the Catholic Church. Undoubtedly, God writes straight on crooked lines...

Mere Christianity truly caught Collins’ attention because of its argument concerning the moral law. Indeed, Lewis affirms – in complete agreement with Catholic doctrine – that it is inscribed in the soul of all men.

This law is evoked in diverse ways, every day, without the one who does so stopping to analyse the basis of their argument. From a child declaring that it is “not fair” to distribute different amounts of ice cream at a birthday party, to two doctors arguing about the legality of conducting research with embryonic stem cells – one opposing it because it violates



**“Did I not consider myself a scientist?
Does a scientist draw conclusions
without considering the data?”**

Dr. Francis Collins; on the previous page,
Prof. Garnham in a laboratory

the sanctity of human life, and the other defending it because the potential to alleviate human suffering constitutes a reasonable justification – all of them will have to resort to a standard of conduct, even if implicitly.

This standard is the moral law, which can also be called “the law of correct behaviour,” and it is a matter of knowing whether a given action approaches or deviates from the requirements of that law.

Someone might object that this ethics is the product of certain cultural traditions.

Lewis, however, shows how asserting this would be a “resounding lie. If a man were to go into a library and spend a few days with the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* he will soon discover the massive unanimity of the practical reason in man. From the Babylon Hymn to Samos, from the Law of Manu, the *Book of the Dead*, the Analects, the Stoics, the Platonists, from Australian aborigines and Redskins, he will collect the same triumphantly monotonous denunciations of oppression, murder, treachery and falsehood, the same injunctions of kindness to the aged, the young, and the weak, of almsgiving and impartiality and honesty”.³

Charity: how to explain it?

However, moral law also has another dimension that left Francis Collins amazed: altruism, the generosity that emerges in the human soul when confronted with a situation that requires helping others, being willing to sacrifice oneself solely for the benefit of others.

It is the so-called agape, which does not seek reciprocation.

Lewis argues, with solid arguments, that altruism represents a great challenge for evolutionary atheists, since



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Francis Collins ended up adhering to the Catholic Faith, because it was the God of the Christians who best personified the reasons he found to believe in a divinity

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

they have not yet been able to explain how this impulse could have arisen in human beings through exclusively natural evolutionary means.

There is no convincing parallel to agape in any irrational being.

Now, if natural law does not come from either cultural conditions or evolution, how can it be explained? Lewis answers:

“If there was a controlling power outside the universe, it could not show itself to us as one of the facts inside the universe – no more than the architect of a house could actually be a wall or staircase or fireplace in that house.

The only way in which we could expect it to show itself would be inside ourselves as an influence or a command that urges us to behave in a certain way. And that is just what we do find inside ourselves. Surely this ought to arouse our suspicions?”⁴

Atheism no longer made sense.

The then twenty-six-year-old doctor was completely astonished by the reasonableness that Faith offered him, and how these realities are obscured by the experience of the contemporary world.

The moral law reflected the resplendent rays of the Creator and demanded a series of considerations regarding God.

Agnosticism, which once seemed to him a safe haven, revealed itself as an undeniable excuse for wrongdoing.

After a long conversion process, in which other objections were also overcome, Francis Collins ended up adhering to the Catholic Religion, because he realized that the God of the Christians was the one who best personified the reasons he found to believe in a divinity.

Hope for others

The account of the conversion of someone who is still alive, and who dedicated his life to the study of human DNA, constitutes further proof of how religion is not limited to a belief to which one adheres as learned from one’s parents, but a reasonable fact, even from a scientific point of view.

The name Francis Collins brings hope for the conversion of those men whose “faith” in preconceived notions against religion is their greatest barrier to belief in God. ✦

¹ COLLINS, Francis. *The Language of God. A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. New York: Free Press, 2007, p.16.

² Idem, p.20.

³ LEWIS, Clive Staple. *Christian Reflections*. Grand Rapid/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1967, p.95-96.

⁴ LEWIS, Clive Staple. *Mere Christianity*. New York: HarperCollins, [s.d.], p.24 [e-book].



A Folly in Which Not Even Demons Believe

In classical antiquity, only a few philosophers – one named Diagoras, born in Melos, and another named Theodore, known as the Atheist – declared themselves atheists, and those who did so never gained the support of their contemporaries. It was only with the marked moral and religious decline of humanity between the 17th and 18th centuries that atheism gained numerous adherents.

Indeed, a significant historical turning point came about with the Enlightenment, whose followers, some atheists, others agnostics, and most deists, deified reason to the detriment of the dogmas of the Catholic Faith. The spread of these ideas paved the way for the emergence of so-called scientific socialism in the 19th century. Its theorists – Marx, Engels and Feuerbach, manifestly atheists – profoundly influenced the religious, political, social and economic events of the 20th century.

Following the same path, in a new historical milestone, were the ideologues of the 1968 Sorbonne anarchist movement, Herbert Marcuse, Jean Paul Sartre, and Louis Althusser, to name but a few. In this 21st century, to list all the atheist philosophers and thinkers would needlessly extend this article...

However, where can we find the key to unravel the core of this problem? What is the fundamental cause of the error of atheist ideologues?

The perennial thought of St. Thomas offers us an illuminating answer to these questions. Indeed, we human beings are incapable of seeing God directly; therefore, His existence is not evident to us. However, based on observation of the world and everyday life, and through logical reasoning and deduction, the Angelic Doctor demonstrated the existence of God without resorting to faith and theology (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.2, a.3).

Thus, using simple human intellect, he achieved a very high understanding of the Creator.

From this perspective, in which the virtue of faith is not a prerequisite for believing in the existence of God, a question discussed by Aquinas is surprising: Do the demons have faith (cf. II-II, q.5, a.2)?

St. Thomas resolves the question by quoting Scripture: “Even the demons

believe – and shudder” (Jas 2:19). Aware that this sentence could raise perplexities, he clarifies it. “To believe is an act of the intellect inasmuch as the will moves it to assent” (II-II, q.4, a.2), and the so-called faith of demons does not correspond to “the will being directed to the good” by which “to believe is a praiseworthy action” (II-II, q.5, a.2), as is the case with the faithful of Christ. On the contrary, in demons it is a faith “in a way, compelled to believe” (II-II, q.5, a.2, ad 1), for they recognize the existence of God because of the evidence of the signs they perceive.

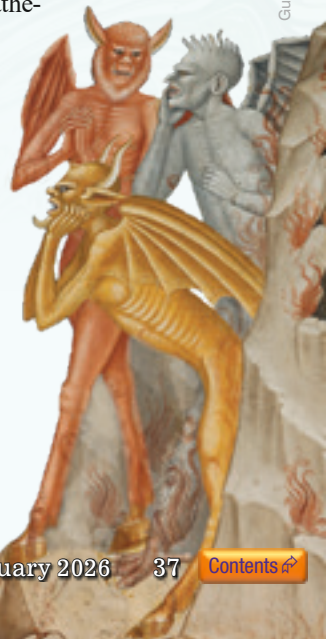
Furthermore, this perception, sharpened by their natural intellectual acuity, does not give demons the opportunity to deny the aforementioned signs, a fact that deeply displeases them (cf. II-II, q.5, a.2, ad 2-3). Consequently, fallen angels have never been and never will be atheists. Their extremely high intelligence does not allow them to be ensnared by such mental folly, such deception, such idiocy. This is the error into which atheists fall.

Scripture rightly asserts: “fools die for lack of sense” (Prv 10:21), “but a man of understanding walks aright” (Prv 15:21). ✠

**The existence of God is evident to the demons,
fallen but highly intelligent angels.**

Many atheists, however, fall into the error of denying it.

To the left, Marx, Engels and Sartre; to the right, detail of the fresco of Andrea di Bonaiuto - Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, Florence (Italy)



Gustavo Kralj

A Friend of the Cross

A Saint as unusual for our time as for his own, this German Dominican endured terrible physical and moral suffering, alleviated only by special graces from Heaven.

✠ Sr. Adriana María Sánchez



With divine pedagogy, the Lord often raises up examples of virtue that we might almost call extreme, in order to, through the existence of an outstanding model, moderate in men the disordered passions that oppose it and encourage them to embark on a path that they would otherwise never embrace. This was the case, for example, with the *Poverello* of Assisi, whose radical betrothal to Lady Poverty has inspired countless souls throughout the centuries to use the goods of this world with moderation and to desire those of Heaven.

From this perspective, I invite the reader to also consider the life of Blessed Henry Suso. While many employ all their efforts to escape suffering, this German Dominican seemed to seek after it, always thirsting to suffer more for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, certain misfortunes that would not befall ordinary men seemed to pursue him, making his existence a series of apparent contradictions, accepted with serenity.

The recollection of his life may cause astonishment and even perplexity in our days, so averse to any suffering, but it will nonetheless be a salutary in-

itation to face the difficulties of daily life with joy and courage, as faithful disciples of the Crucified Lord.

At the dawn of life, the choice of penance

Born around 1295 on the shores of Lake Constance, on the border between Germany and Switzerland, Henry Suso would prove to be an unusual person even within his own family. Son of Count von Berg, he nevertheless took his mother's name: Seuss.¹

Little or almost nothing is known of his childhood. It is known, however, that his father had wanted him to become a soldier, but, upon realizing that his inclination was not towards the weapons of this world, sent him to the Dominican monastery in Constance when he was only thirteen years old. The young man enjoyed a carefree life there until he was eighteen, at which age a grace would impel him to take another path.

One day, sitting in the monastery chapel, he realized how frivolous his conduct had been until then, little inclined to religious observance, and decided to embark on the path of penance in reparation for his faults.

This resolution would accompany him throughout his life, in his various

occupations: as a student in Cologne and disciple of Meister Eckhart; as professor, prior and prolific writer of spiritual works; as a preacher and spiritual director.

Voluntary bodily mortifications

Numerous were the means employed by the saints throughout the centuries to mortify themselves, whether in reparation for their own sins or those of others, or for pure love for Our Lord Jesus Christ. In the case of Henry Suso, he understood that only those who kiss, embrace, and carry their cross with love reach Heaven, and he wanted to do this literally.

He made himself a wooden cross, with thirty nails and seven needles, and tied it to his back, carrying it day and night, so that the nails pierced his flesh without ever leaving him free from pain.

He hardly drank water, regulating with a small cup he had made for himself the exact amount he allowed himself to ingest during the day. Sometimes he felt so thirsty that, during the sprinkling of holy water, he would open his lips wishing that some drop would refresh his dry tongue, but not even that was granted to him. He offered everything to relieve Our Lord

on the Cross, who had only vinegar and gall as refreshment.

This voluntary penance would bring tears to his eyes, as he felt he could not maintain the sacrifices that God had inspired him to practise. To comfort him – that is, to give him strength to endure suffering– Our Lady appeared to him with the Child Jesus, who held a small chalice full of fresh water. She then gave it to Henry to drink, and his thirst was quenched.

As a bed he used an old door on which he had placed a mat made of reeds that only reached until his knees, and he did not use a blanket. He wore a hair shirt under his clothing and performed many other mortifications at night, too numerous to enumerate here. Any movement during his sleep caused tremendous discomfort, as he also tied his hands so that he could not even swat away mosquitoes.

His greatest suffering, however, would be not finding anyone who shared the same ideal, leading him to increasingly seek refuge in the supernatural.

Fortified by intense mystical graces

Providence, however, did not delay in making the fervent religious sense the great predilection He had for him, sending abundant mystical graces. The first he recounts consisted of an ecstasy in which he experienced the delights of God's love, after which he seemed like a different man.

On another occasion he saw his Guardian Angel, embraced him and begged him never to abandon him. The celestial protector replied that that he would never leave him, since God had so united Himself to him. The souls in Purgatory – including his own father – as well as the saints in Heaven, among whom was his mother, appeared to him frequently, describing both the torments of the purifying flames, and the joys of eternity. He also had several revelations about the future, which unfortunately were not recorded.

Once, in an ecstasy of love, Henry traced on his chest, with a stylus, the sweet Name of Jesus, which remained indelibly engraved there. After some time, a small golden cross, as if studied with precious stones, appeared above his heart. From it also emanated the Most Holy Name of the Saviour, amidst an intense light.

The culmination of such graces, however, occurred in connection with his betrothal to Eternal Wisdom, presented in the Scriptures as a beautiful maiden. Upon hearing the reading of



Blessed Henry Suso -
St. Paul Church, Valladolid (Spain)

*His greatest suffering
would be not finding
anyone who shared
the same ideal, leading
him to increasingly
seek refuge in the
supernatural*

the Wisdom Books, Henry felt enraptured with love and understood that he should surrender himself entirely to Wisdom, as her servant. Having begged for the good fortune to see Her, She appeared to him among clouds, shining like the morning star and radiant as the dawn, and said to him sweetly: "Give Me your heart, my son!" (cf. Prv 23:26).

Near the end of his life, Henry had a vision in which, surrounded by Angels, he asked one of them how the indwelling of God in his soul occurred. The celestial spirit told him to look within himself, and the Blessed saw his heart as if through a clear crystal; within it was Eternal Wisdom, beside his own soul, which God enveloped in His arms.

Knighted to confront interior suffering

After sixteen years of terrible bodily penances, another Angel appeared to him in the form of a young man, stating that a phase of his life had ended.

Some time later, the same celestial spirit returned, bringing with him a knight's armour. He said that only at that time would Henry begin his spiritual combat; all that he had suffered was nothing compared to what was to come. Until then he had fought only as a common soldier, but God wished to knight him. Astonished, he asked to know how many sufferings awaited him, and the Angel answered him: "If you can count these innumerable stars, you can also count the number of tribulations that are reserved for you."

He then begged to know what these sufferings would consist of, and only three were revealed to him: he would lose his good name and reputation, which would hurt him much more than the bodily penances he inflicted upon himself; He would find neither friendship nor loyalty from those who had always given them to him, and those who were loyal to him would suffer along with him; he would no longer be



comforted by God or by men, and any attempt to obtain any delight for himself would be frustrated.

Feeling that his strength would fail him, Henry fell prostrate in anguish, but pleaded that the divine will be done in him. Through an inner voice, the Lord assured him that He would always be by his side, helping him to bear all the tribulations. The next morning, looking out the window, he saw a dog tearing apart a piece of cloth, and God had him understand that this was how he should be in the hands of others, suffering all in silence, without ever complaining. The religious took the cloth and kept it with him as a reminder of this episode.

On the feast of Our Lady of Candelaria, the Child Jesus appeared to him, stating that He wished to teach him the attitude he should have in the midst of his sufferings, a lesson that can undoubtedly be useful to any Christian: not to think about when the suffering would end, but to be ready to joyfully accept the next one that would surely come.

A whirlwind of persecutions and slander

During his travels throughout Europe, countless misfortunes befell him, fulfilling exactly what had been revealed to him by the Angel. It seemed that everything happened to Henry Suso that would never happen to anyone else, even the most absurd and unimaginable things...

Arriving at a city church, he knelt before a pious crucifix, prayed, and then left. That same night, there was a robbery in that church, and all the candles and wax figures offered by the faithful with their requests were stolen. Now, a seven-year-old girl saw him praying there and accused him of the theft, and so Henry had to flee in haste, under pain of death.

On a trip to the Netherlands, stirred by a summons to participate in a chapter of the Dominicans, two members of his own Order came to meet him, accusing him of having written books containing heretical doctrines that had contaminated the entire country. They therefore took him to the tribunal, where he was harshly reprimanded and threatened with severe punishment if he did not amend his errors. While he returned to his monastery, a terrible illness befell him, confin-

ing him to bed with a fever and nearly causing his death.

Persecution was such a constant in his life that, after four weeks had passed without him being attacked, he was astonished by the fact. He commented that he was so convinced that God visits his friends with trials that, seeing himself free from difficulties, he feared that the Lord had forgotten him. He had not finished speaking when a Dominican brother came, warning him that the lord of a nearby castle was searching for him in all the monasteries in order to kill him, on the accusation of having stolen his daughter, who had decided to embrace religious life. Another man accused him of having led his wife astray, as she had become more modest, and said Henry would have to pay for this. Rejoicing to find that God had not forgotten him, he fled immediately.

There was, in a certain village, a malevolent woman who feigned to repent for her sins and would go to Confession to Henry. However, seeing that she did not amend her ways and led a life of sin, he decided not to attend to her anymore. The woman, furious and wanting to damage the one who had only done her good, accused him of being the father of the child she had out of wedlock. The scandalous lie spread further than his reputation for holiness, reaching even the superior of the Order of Preachers in the German province. Many, including those closest to him, believed the calumny, and mistreated him. After a long period of suffering and terrible anguish, fearing the worst, his innocence was recognized, and the woman who had contrived against him died suddenly.

Saved from death by his virtue

This, however, was not the last time he escaped death. During a journey, his



Blessed Henry Suso - Woodcut from the National and University Library of Strasbourg (France)

Incomparably more severe than the many bodily penances he inflicted upon himself would be the interior tribulations that lay in store for him

Henry often felt himself to be weak and incapable, but he learned from Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself that strength would come to him from above

companion – young and agile – went ahead on the road, leaving him alone. Before entering a forest that he had to traverse, Henry suddenly came across a young woman accompanied by a tall man of terrifying appearance, carrying a spear and a dagger. Faced with this scene, the religious made the sign of the cross and, trembling, risked advancing, with the aforementioned couple behind him.

At a certain point, in the middle of the dense forest, the young woman approached him and asked if he would hear her Confession. He agreed, and the young woman then told him her sad fate: the man who accompanied her was a murderer, who robbed and killed everyone he met, and she had been forced to become his wife. Even more terrified, seeing his fears confirmed, the Blessed gave her absolution, and the three continued their dreadful journey.

At one point, the murderer himself approached Henry, also asking that he hear his Confession. His heart pounded, and, feeling helpless but unable to refuse the Sacrament, he heard his Confession. The account was astonishing. The evildoer recounted the numerous crimes he had committed and, with lavish detail, described one in particular: “I once came to these woods to rob and kill, as I did today,



At left, Henry Suso in dialogue with Christ on the Cross; at right, the Blessed being tormented by different sufferings - Manuscript of the National and University Library of Strasbourg (France)

and, finding a venerable priest, I confessed to him while we were walking in this very spot. When the Confession was over, I took this dagger and stabbed him with it, and then threw his body into the Rhine.” Terrified, realizing that the same fate awaited him, the priest felt faint.

Seeing him turn pale and about to collapse, the young girl ran to him and exclaimed: “Don’t be afraid, he won’t kill you!” The murderer then added: “I have heard many good things about you, and you will have your reward today, for I will let you live. Pray to God that, for your sake, He may help and favour me, a poor criminal, in my last hour.”

The example of a friend of the Cross

The facts to be told would be countless, but the entire life of Henry Suso could be summarized in these few words: friend of the Cross. If he was not being persecuted, he was troubled by illnesses; and when he was in perfect health, some other disgrace would befall him, and so he was never free of suffering. He often felt weak and incapable, but he learned

from Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself that strength would come to him from on high.

Despite so many sufferings and vicissitudes that almost led to his death, Henry reached a venerable age and died on January 25, 1366, in the city of Ulm, where he had spent the last eighteen years of his life. More than two centuries later, his body remained incorrupt and exuded a sweet perfume. However, years later the relics disappeared completely.

Let us, then, ask Blessed Henry Suso to also make us lovers of the Cross. We do not need to make a wooden cross for ourselves and tie it to our shoulders, but simply bear serenely – and joyfully! – the crosses that God sends us each day, trusting that, if we do so, we will one day receive our reward in Heaven. ✠

¹ The biographical information contained in this article was taken from the works: BLESSED HENRY SUSO. *The Life of Blessed Henry Suso by Himself*. London: Methuen and Company, 1913; DORCY, OP, Mary Jean. *St. Dominic's Family. Lives of over 300 Famous Dominicans*. Rockford: TAN, 1983.



A Mother and Protector, Always Solicitous

Her support during a serious illness, her assistance to two fishermen in distress, and her solutions to intricate family problems demonstrate how Dona Lucilia always attends to those who turn to her, in difficulties both great and small.



✠ **Elizabete Fátima Astorino**

Sacred Scripture recounts that, when persecuted by the wicked Jezebel, Elijah fled to the summit of Horeb, the mountain of God, where he spent the night in a cave. There the divine word came to him: “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by” (1 Kgs 19:11). The Almighty, however, manifested Himself in the “sound of sheer silence” (1 Kgs 19:12), and not in the roar of a rushing wind, the earthquake or devouring fire.

Is it not true that we too need delicacy of soul to perceive the voice of God, or the help He sends us from above through timely interventions, subtle aids, and small consolations?

“I thought for sure that I wasn’t going to survive. I was really saying goodbye, without really being prepared to not see my daughter grow up”

In this regard, we offer our readers three accounts in which efficacious celestial action manifests itself gently, through the intervention of Dona Lucilia. May these examples help us grow in confidence in God, who does not forsake those who invoke the intercession of this kind mother.



Thainara with her little daughter, in the hospital

A request promptly answered

Mrs. Thainara Adão, from Joinville (Brazil), sends us a touching account of the protection of Dona Lucilia, who supported her during a phase of her life marked by great suffering and apprehension.

In 2022, longing to be a mother and very saddened after several months of setbacks, Thainara asked Our Lady for this grace, through Dona Lucilia’s intercession: “I remembered Dona Lucilia’s story, how she was an example of a mother, of virtue and of love for God. So, with her photograph in my hands, I asked that, if I could be even just a little like the exceptional mother she was, that she would intercede for me and obtain for me the grace of having a baby. After that prayer I felt at peace, as if all the anxiety had passed.”

Just one month later, Thainara’s prayer was answered: “There inside me was my baby, the answer to my prayers and, above all, a demonstration of the pure and genuine love that Dona Lucilia has for me. I had a high-risk pregnancy; my baby was born underweight, with difficulty breathing and a heart palpitations, but at every moment I saw a light illuminating us. I knew that my daughter was a promise and that ev-

everything would be alright.” Indeed, her little daughter, Maria Clara, successfully overcame these initial tribulations, growing healthy and strong.

However, Dona Lucilia’s maternal solicitude would still manifest itself in another sense and in another trial, with other objectives.

“She is my protector”

In November 2023, on the night before returning to work after maternity leave, Thainara fell ill: “At 2:30 in the morning I woke up with a severe headache, like I had never felt before, which caused me a lot of mental confusion. I got up to get some medicine and my body became numb. My back ached, and I had lost all movement. I had constant vomiting, my vision went dark and it felt like something was running down my spine.”

She was rushed to the hospital and doctors found that she had suffered a haemorrhagic stroke caused by a neurological tumour. Without understanding the seriousness of her situation, she learned that she would be transferred to the ICU, where she spent a few days in semi-consciousness, waiting for a complete diagnosis.

From that period, she only remembers the moment when she received the comfort of the Sacraments from a Herald priest: “That’s when I thought for sure that I wasn’t going to survive. We talked a little. I was really saying goodbye, without really being prepared to not see my daughter grow up. I also remember asking the priest why this was happening to me.”

In the midst of the physical and spiritual ordeal she was going through, without the strength to face the imminence of death and reluctant to accept what seemed to be God’s will, Thainara received, in a small episode, a glimmer of hope:

“After a few hours, a nurse who was conducting the tests asked me who the lady in the photograph near the hospital equipment was. I couldn’t see

it, but she showed the photograph to me and, without knowing how it had ended up there, I replied: ‘This is Dona Lucilia, she is my protector.’ Even without knowing her story very well, I trusted then that I would have a chance and that it wasn’t my time to go.”

A difficult, but beneficial experience

The days of her stay in the ICU continued, the headaches and body pain worsened, and Thainara needed help with everything, even the simplest movements. Faced with so many difficulties, she began to lose confidence again. However, a peculiar dream came to lift her spirits.

She saw herself in the hospital, but at the same time flying in a lilac sky, with a feeling of great well-being, while she heard someone tell her: “It’s not your time yet.”

The next day, she was informed of the time of the surgery to remove the tumour. She continues her account: “I was anxious, but happy and confident. At no point did anything negative cross my mind; I was certain that someone had interceded for me.”

Before entering the operating room, Thainara placed herself in God’s hands, praying: “Lord, You know my heart and my will to live, but may Your will be done. Dona Lucilia, I surrender my heart and my life to you.”

The procedure was a success, and although they anticipated a difficult and lengthy recuperation, the doctors assured her that she would make a full recovery.

On the night she was to be discharged from the hospital, she had an-



Thainara standing beside a portrait of Dona Lucilia

Reproduction

Before entering the operating room, Thainara placed herself in God’s hands: “I was certain that someone had interceded for me”

other dream: “On my shoulders was Dona Lucilia’s lilac shawl, that colour that brought me so much calm and hope. I said to myself: ‘Everything will be alright, it’s not your time yet.’ I woke up crying, but with a peaceful heart, because I was convinced that Dona Lucilia had been with me the whole time, taking care of me, protecting me under her lilac shawl and saving me.

“To this day I have dreams about her lilac shawl and the full certainty

that I am her daughter and that she is my mother, my intercessor.”

The experience had its difficult and even dramatic sides, but it left her, in addition to the profound conviction of being loved by Dona Lucilia, with valuable lessons for her spiritual life:

“Many things taught me to change my way of thinking and my daily life. Everything that happened to me was not just an illness, but my rebirth; I am grateful for my life today and for the intercession of Dona Lucilia. I praise and thank her every day.”

Saved from a predicament “in the blink of an eye”

From Miracema (Brazil), Mr. Lenilton Rabelo Rosa, a great devotee of Dona Lucilia, to whom he always turns in times of difficulty, writes to us:

“One day in 2022 I went fishing, intending to go nearby, as I had little gas in the car tank and only thirty *reals* in my pocket. I called my brother and we went to the city of Itaocara. We arrived there, but the water was too murky to fish. We decided to go further.

“The gas tank was on reserve and we spent the thirty *reals* to refuel. We drove another ninety-five kilometres on dirt roads and arrived in São Sebastião do Paraíba, but there too the water was murky. We didn’t think about the fuel and drove another thirty or forty kilometres to Fernando Lobo, a riverside village where we found good water for fishing.”

Lenilton and his brother drove down a winding, grassy road. They fished peacefully until, around nine o’clock at night, a heavy downpour forced them to stop. They then put the fish in the car and... then the problems began, as they had to climb a hill with wet grass, mud, and many potholes.

He recounts: “I accelerated for a while to gain momentum and climb, but the car kept sliding and stalling. I tried about five or six times, without success.

“I looked at the fuel gauge and saw that the needle was just above the reserve. I remembered Dona Lucilia and shouted loudly: ‘Dona Lucilia, help us!’ I accelerated again and the car suddenly surged forward, as if it had four-wheel drive.

“So, I turned to my brother and said: ‘Did you see that? Dona Lucilia got us out of this in the blink of an eye!’”

“Where did this money come from?”

However, they still had one hundred and eighty kilometres of muddy road to travel to the city of Itaocara, and they did not have enough gas. They asked Dona Lucilia for help once again and set off.

The narrative continues: “We continued talking about the day’s events and, when we realized it, we were already in Itaocara.” They were even more surprised to find that the gasoline gauge had not even moved.

However, the fuel was insufficient for the rest of the journey, so they decided to sell some fish in the city square to refuel the car.

Lenilton continues: “I hoisted the cooler with the fish onto my head to carry it, and asked my brother to get the car keys from my pocket; when he put his hand in my pocket, he took out a twenty-*real* note along with the key.

“I asked: ‘Where did this money come from?’ We didn’t have that amount and, since we were very wet, the bill was almost falling apart.”

Not understanding how that bill had ended up in his pocket, Lenilton left it on the car’s dashboard to dry and set off with his brother for Santo Antônio de Pádua, where Dona Lucilia had another surprise in store for them: upon putting his hand in his pocket, he found another twenty-*real* bill, folded and completely dry!

Thus he concludes his account: “I realized it was to prove that it was Dona Lucilia who obtained these graces for me. She pulled me out of the

mud, made the gasoline last until Pádua, and gave me forty *reals*... Three graces in a single day.”

Advice that saved her marriage

Yes, a piece of advice that changed the course of her life, and even the destiny of her family, was what R. B., from Minas Gerais (Brazil), received while in the midst of a dramatic family situation.

The light that shone to illuminate her path and the beacon that guided her family to the “end of the tunnel” consisted of devotion to Dona Lucilia. Here is how she narrates the means used by Providence to bring her meet such a kind mother:

“It was March 19, 2024, and I didn’t know what to do to make my husband stop drinking. He drank every day, from Monday to Monday. From beer he moved on to whiskey and he mixed drinks. To avoid fights and demands, he started drinking secretly, hiding his drink when I got home, and he even hid a bottle of whiskey in the closet... The situation at home was a real torment.

“That day, I arrived home from work and found him once again very drunk, without the strength even to fight... I went out with my oldest son in search of a priest to advise me. I was already consecrated to Our Lady, but I was willing to get a divorce because I couldn’t stand living like this anymore.”

However, Divine Providence led R. B. down a very different path. Since the church she went to was closed, she remembered the house of the Heralds of the Gospel in her city, and she went there hoping to get some spiritual help. Her confidence was not disappointed, because there she received advice from a Herald priest that would change her life:

“During our conversation, the priest told me that I needed divine intervention, because there are things

that we, as human beings, cannot solve on our own. Separating would not solve the problem, because my husband would continue drinking and sinking deeper and deeper. I had to fight for him and for our family. At that moment, he gave me a holy card of Dona Lucilia, briefly told me her story, and suggested making a promise to her: to pray a thousand Hail Marys asking for her intercession.

“I went back home determined to enter this battle, with the right weapons. I began to pray every day, with faith and confidence, asking for the intercession of Our Lady and Dona Lucilia for my husband and for our family. And then, what seemed impossible happened: March 22nd, just three days after beginning the prayers, was the last day my husband drank!”

Dona Lucilia’s intercession before the throne of the Blessed Virgin Mary was promptly heard: “For the honour and glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the powerful intercession of Our Lady and Dona Lucilia, my husband has never again had a drop of alcohol! Since then he has remained sober and has become a devotee of Our Lady. He already wears the holy scapular and is preparing for Confirmation and to consecrate himself to her.”

After a long wait, the house was sold!

Family problems with regard to inheritances have been very common since the dawn of humanity. Even the pages of the Gospels (cf. Lk 12:13) re-



João S. Clá Dias

Dona Lucilia in March of 1968, roughly a month before her death

“I went back home determined to enter this battle with faith and confidence, asking for the intercession of Our Lady and Dona Lucilia”

count an episode in which Our Lord Jesus Christ is asked to intervene in a dispute of this nature between two brothers... Far from favouring the avarice of either party, the Divine

Master recommended that men of all times confidently abandon their needs to the Father, who will provide for us in every way.

However, there are occasions when heavenly intervention is granted to us through an intercessor, who asks for a solution for our afflictions on our behalf. Thus, after confirming the effectiveness of Dona Lucilia’s intercession in saving her marriage, R. B. decided to place another thorny matter in her hands: the sale of a problematic property inherited by her husband and his brothers.

The house in question was a source of great distress to her husband, as the brothers who lived there with their mother, both before and after her death, had not paid their taxes properly for years... As the eldest brother,

the property was in his name, and this irregular situation caused him to be in bad standing with the government.

“My mother-in-law had passed away more than seven years ago, and this house was not sold. It had overdue taxes, no occupancy permit, and the siblings couldn’t agree on its value,” recounts R. B.

However, after asking for Dona Lucilia’s intercession to overcome that difficulty, surpassing all human expectations, the house was finally sold in December 2024.

In a touching manner, R. B. writes to thank Dona Lucilia for the protection and support received: “This testimony is a way to thank and glorify God’s action in our lives. Grace came, and our family was restored. Praise be to God for all of this!” ❖

In Mary's Hands Forever

New groups completing the course on the Reconquest Catholic Formation Platform were consecrated in November as slaves of love of the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the method of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort. Of special note are the ceremonies held at the Mary Help of Christians Parish in Mexico City and the Mary Our Queen Parish in Puebla, Mexico; at the Santa Helena Parish in Antiguo Cus-

atlán, El Salvador; at the cathedral of Juigalpa, Nicaragua; at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima in Tocancipá, Colombia; at the St. Roque Parish in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia; at the St. Dominic of Guzmán Parish in Santiago, Chile; at the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Ypacaraí, Paraguay; at the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Montevideo; and at the Heralds' houses in Buenos Aires and Lima.



Mexico City



Chile



Colombia



Colombia



Argentina



Peru



El Salvador



Paraguay



Nicaragua



Puebla (Mexico)



Uruguay



Bolivia

Delvid Lima

Jesse Arce

Daniel Quintanilla

Delvid Lima

Jesse Arce

Jano Aracena

Amarus Duarte

Filomena Damasceno



Sacraments of Christian Initiation – Hundreds of the faithful prepared by the Heralds of the Gospel received the Sacraments of Christian initiation in November. The photos show Baptism at the Divine Mercy Parish in Santiago de Surco, Peru (photo 2); In Brazil, First Communion at the Cuiabá Cathedral (photo 1) and at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in the city of Cotia, (photo 3); Confirmation ceremonies at the Church of the Holy Saviour in Lauro de Freitas, presided over by the Most Rev. Marco Eugênio Galvão Leite de Almeida, Auxiliary Bishop of Salvador (photo 4), at the Our Lady of Divine Providence Parish in Belo Horizonte, presided over by the Metropolitan Auxiliary Bishop Edmar José da Silva (photo 5), and at Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish in Structural City in the Federal District, presided over by Dom Raymundo Damasceno Assis, Archbishop Emeritus of Aparecida (photo 6).



Brazil – The pipe organ in the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in the city of Juiz de Fora was inaugurated on November 6, during a solemn Eucharist followed by a concert (photos 1 and 2). Then, on November 25 in the same church, the 27th Battalion of the Military Police commemorated their thirtieth anniversary with a Holy Mass (photo 3). Both ceremonies were presided over by Metropolitan Archbishop Gil Antônio Moreira.



Giovanna Mondello



1



2



3

Martina Sommavigo

Italy – In November, the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary visited the Basilica of St. Anthony in Messina, bringing hope and comfort to the faithful even in their very homes (photo 1), as well as the Church of St. Mary of the Holy Spirit Shrine in the same city (photo 2). On All Souls' Day, members of the Heralds assisted in the liturgical service of the Holy Mass presided over by the Patriarch of Venice, Archbishop Francesco Moraglia, at the Church of San Michele in Isola (photo 3).

Photos: Xavier Jacob



1



2



3

Paraguay – On November 14, the Municipal Traffic Police of Asunción celebrated its sixtieth anniversary with a Holy Mass, celebrated by Fr. Ismael Fuentealba, EP (photo 1). On November 22, the Heralds participated in the Eucharist in honour of the Patron of the Christ the King Parish in Ciudad del Este, followed by a musical concert (photo 3), and the following day they made their annual pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Miracles in Caacupé (photo 2).

Photos: Thiago Carlos



Campo Grande (Brazil) – A blessed “Afternoon with Mary” was held at the Heralds’ house on October 25th. The activities consisted of a lecture given by Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP, followed by the solemn crowning of the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the celebration of Holy Mass.



Photos: João Guimarães

Franco da Rocha (Brazil) – As part of the celebrations for the 81st anniversary of Franco da Rocha, the Most Rev. Sérgio Aparecido Colombo, Bishop of Bragança Paulista, celebrated a solemn Eucharist in the Benedito Bueno de Moraes Park, accompanied by the choir of seminarians from the Clerical Society of Apostolic Life Virgo Flos Carmeli. On this occasion, the mayor of the city, Mrs. Lorena Oliveira, crowned the image of Our Lady.



Emerson Júnior



Laércio Peixoto



João Carolino



Kesiano Trindade



Bruno Stevan

All Hallow's Eve – The Solemnity of All Saints took on a special note of innocence in Brazil with the participation of children dressed in costumes reflecting the characteristics of their favourite saints. Highlights include the celebrations held at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Cotia, São Paulo (photo 1), at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Juiz de Fora (photo 5), at the St. Therese Chapel in Belo Horizonte (photo 3) and at the Heralds' houses in Fortaleza (photo 2) and Campos dos Goytacazes, Rio de Janeiro (photo 4).

The immaculate conception

“Versus” the Immaculate Conception

This title is not a play on words – because if it were, it would be in poor taste – but rather a synthesis of two antagonistic programmes of life.



✠ Raphaël Six

“Believe in yourself”: self-confidence is one of the top-selling values of today – and at a high price.

Now, the laws of supply and demand lead us to conclude that if there are sales, there is interest in the item, and if there is interest, there is possibly a need for it. No one cares about their car’s air conditioning unless it stops working. Therefore, this philosopher’s stone called security and inner peace may be being sought after on account of its having become more difficult to find. Has it deserted our world?

* * *

In the photos illustrating these pages, we have, on one side, Joseph Goebbels, Nazi propaganda minister who, until his death by suicide in 1945, was Hitler’s closest collaborator.

His passion was writing. However, his failures in this field made him the ideal person to harmonize with the *Führer*, a man who had also suffered setbacks, as in his youth he had wanted to devote himself to the visual arts, but without success. His biographers note that the meeting between the two was that of a frustrated writer and a failed painter, both choosing world domination as their second career option.

Fate has its ironies, and so does human pride...

Goebbels became a staunch Nazi. Married to a great admirer of Hitler and father of six children, he had a family that, at first glance, was the perfect Aryan model. Dominated by him, cinema, radio and the press exposed his life to the admiration of the

entire *Reich*: at work, on holiday, at home, or being visited by Uncle Adolf.

However, behind appearances, the giant of Nazi propaganda was nothing more than a dwarf in the kingdom of pygmies. And this is not just a reference to Goebbels’ proverbial short stature, which made even Hitler look like a big man – not a great man, which is much more difficult – but above all to the fact that the brilliant country of Germany grew so much under Nazism that it imploded: from a supernova, it turned into a black hole, reducing to nothing anything that came near it, including life.

Recalling all this deception, we ask ourselves: how can this be explained?

In *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, Dr. Plinio denounces the revolutionary maxim he describes as the “immaculate conception of the individual.”

As André Frossard² observed, after original sin was abolished by philosophical decree, starting with Rousseau, it was decided that man is born good. We should not distrust ourselves; on the contrary, we must seek the drive to surpass ourselves within



Joseph Goebbels

ourselves. Now, when man seeks within himself what he lacks – which is a contradictory situation – and does not find it, what happens? Goebbels.

Made into an actor for the interests of the state – or, rather, in the interests of what Dr. Plinio also denounced as the “immaculate conception of the masses and the State,”¹ the same that would lead Germany to the above-mentioned suicide – he was nevertheless unable to hide his own insecurity, betrayed by his rigid gestures, vacant gaze, and broad smile on lips of vague contours. All this indicates the frustration of a man who adhered to “believe in yourself”, a proposition far more seductive than the Greek axiom: “know yourself”.

Now, “humility is walking in truth,” says St. Teresa, adding: the truth is that we are misery and nothing. Every man goes through moments when the mask of the “immaculate conception of the individual” falls away, revealing what he really is. At such times, there are two paths: either to try to put it on again at all costs, even by a shot to the head, as Goebbels more or less did; or to follow the example of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe.

This Franciscan religious also devoted himself to the mass media. He was able to extend his sphere of influence even to Japan, where, without initially speaking a word of the national language, he managed to produce publications that, together, exceeded a circulation of one million copies – and this in a country alien to the Catholic faith, to say the least.

However, the formula for his success was not based on marketing techniques, but rather on one principle: “Do not write anything that the Virgin Mary would not sign.”² A man of delicate conscience, vigilant against his evil inclinations, he knew he was weak. Therefore, he relied on a deep devotion to Our Lady, whom he invoked especially under the title of the Immaculate Conception.



St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe

Kolbe also experienced failures. On several occasions, he was seen sad and anxious; he sometimes wept in the face of setbacks. However, nothing prevented him from overcoming obstacles, because he fought in the shadow of the Immaculate. He saw “the Virgin Mary everywhere and, consequently, difficulties nowhere.”³ One need only contemplate his gaze to be convinced of this.

* * *

Both characters died because of Nazism and had their bodies cremated, as if to confirm the biblical verse that “there is one fate for the righteous and the wicked” (Eccl 9:2). In the after-life, however, Kolbe was welcomed into the arms of the One in whom he had placed his trust. Goebbels, on the other hand, could not save himself.

Therefore, “immaculate conception *versus* Immaculate Conception” is not an empty play on words, but a synthesis of two life programmes, deeply antagonistic in their starting point, their means and, above all, their respective eternal destinations. ✚

¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Revolução e Contra-Revolução*. 9.ed. São Paulo: Arautos do Evangelho, 2024, p.130.

² Cf. FROSSARD, André. *Excusez-mois d'être Français*. Paris: Fayard, 1992, p.41.

³ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, op. cit., p.131.

⁴ ST. TERESA OF AVILA. *Moradas del castillo interior*. Moradas sextas, c.10, n.8.

⁵ FROSSARD, André. *N'oubliez pas l'amour. La passion de Maximilien Kolbe*. Paris: Robert Laffont, 1987, p.93.

⁶ Idem, p.52.

Epiphany, by Pedro Serra -
Collegiate Basilica of Holy Mary
of the Dawn, Manresa (Spain)



The Search and the Wait Rewarded

The Magi arrived in Bethlehem, after their long travels under the scorching Eastern sun in search of the most glorious King of all time, and they found Him in a humble dwelling. And yet they did not for a moment experience the slightest hint of disappointment. On the contrary, they entered the house with all solemnity and adored

that frail Child who, nevertheless, showed the radiance of divinity in His countenance and in His gaze. That night shone with the most sublime splendour in all of history, never to be surpassed by the refined Christian courts that would later flourish.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP