



HERALD'S OF THE GOSPEL

March 2026

*“Let us draw near
to the throne of grace”*

St. Joseph's Great Perplexity

When he noticed the Blessed Virgin in maternity, oblivious that within her was the Divine Infant, St. Joseph undoubtedly experienced great perplexity. [...]

In the throes of his turmoil, as he penetrated Mary's gaze, he continued to see it as God's gaze upon him, more crystalline than prismatic waters, brighter than the most radiant sun. Yet he also noticed the clear signs of pregnancy. [...]

Concerning this point, Dr. Plinio emphasizes: "It is absurd to maintain the contrary. For St. Joseph, it sufficed to watch her or even glance at her from behind. The way her tunic brushed the floor, or She leaned against a table to rest a little while speaking; likewise flowed streams of chastity about her with every gesture, even the movement of her eyelashes." From moment to moment, he marvelled thus at the Saint he had married: pure and celestial. [...]

Knowing her as no one else on earth, he was sure that only She could be the Mother of the Saviour, since there could not possibly be a holiness superior to hers. Then, the mysterious

Virgin prophetically envisaged by Isaiah was Mary! [...]

As Our Lady kept silent despite the outward evidence of her pregnancy, knowing that God wanted to test the confidence of her virginal spouse, he took this as a sign that the Almighty, whom She represented for Joseph, did not want him there. Notwithstanding, he saw a most excellent manifestation of Marian delicacy in that attitude: keeping silent was her way of insinuating that he had to grow to participate in that mystery. [...]

Thus, Dr. Plinio's affirmative description of his ordeal does not seem exaggerated: "After Our Lady, no one on earth suffered as much as St. Joseph. [...] God, as it were,

left him destitute, helpless, alone!" What ought he to do? How should he proceed? Hence, the dire perplexity of the virginal spouse of Mary Most Holy assumes full stature.



St. Joseph - Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Piraquara (Brazil)

CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio.

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Editor:

Mario Luiz Valerio Kühl

Editorial Board:

Severiano Antonio de Oliveira;
Silvia Gabriela Panez;
Marcos Aurelio Chacaliza C.

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Phone: 281-676-8526
E-mail: hgmag@heraldsusa.org
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Virgin of Fatima Association
P. O. Box 698

Nobleton, ON L0G 1N0

Canada

Phone: 1-800-674-3410

www.virginfatima.org

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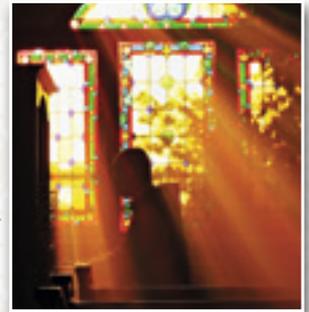
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Timothy Ring

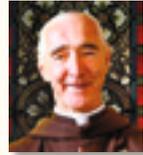
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Send your questions to Fr. Ricardo, by email:
ourreadersask@heralds.org



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

I don't like to use this word, but for lack of a better one... Are some people "predestined" to be saints from the beginning? I know that God has some preferences: He loves the Virgin Mary much more than me, He loves St. Joseph much more than me, He loves Sister Dulce much more than me... Could it be that, in the many heavenly mansions, I am destined to have only a "hut"? I would like to try to understand a little better.

André Moraes – Via e-mail

Dear André, your question is excellent. St. Therese of Lisieux faced a similar doubt: "I often asked myself why God had preferences, why all souls did not receive an equal measure of grace" (*Manuscript A*, 2f).

Would you like to know the answer she discovered? We will see it soon. For now, let us return to your question. From what you describe, we can discern a temptation of the devil to discourage you: "To have only a 'hut'?" Will there be huts in Heaven? ...

The Book of Revelation solves this problem, for it affirms that the Heavenly Jerusalem is entirely made of magnificent precious stones, with splendour that we cannot imagine. There the Angels sing a new song without ceasing, and the righteous always rejoice in the presence of God; there is no weeping or sorrow (cf. Rev 21).

In this world, especially in the modern world, we live amidst competition, comparisons, and envy. In Heaven, everything is different: it could be called the Kingdom of admiration, where each rejoices in the good of the others. After all, we are "one body" (Rom 12:5) and, "if one member is honoured, all rejoice together" (1 Cor 12:26).

If some receive more from God than others, or are more loved by Him, there is no injustice in that. The Lord created us freely, taking us from nothingness by an immense act of love, and giving us the promise of eternal happiness, a "very great" (Gen 15:1) reward.

Thus, faced with the superiority of Our Lady and other saints, the reaction of the blessed is one of contentment and not of sadness, for the greatness of those who are above proclaims the magnificence of Him who created all.

A penitent like St. Augustine will rejoice for all eternity in the untouched innocence of St. Therese, who will sing of God's goodness in lifting such a sinner from the mire, making him one of the beacons of the Holy Church.

With these assumptions in mind, let us now consider the words of the Saint of Lisieux:

"Our Lord [...] showed me the book of nature, and I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would lose its springtime beauty. [...]"

"And so it is in the world of souls, Our Lord's living garden. He has been pleased to create great Saints who may be compared to the lily and the rose, but He has also created lesser ones, who must be content to be daisies or simple violets flowering at His Feet, and whose mission it is to gladden His Divine Eyes [...]. And the more gladly they do His Will the greater is their perfection. I understood this also, that God's Love is made manifest as well in a simple soul which does not resist His grace as in one more highly endowed" (*Manuscript A*, 2v).

And she concludes by saying: "As the sun shines both on the cedar and on the floweret, so the Divine Sun illumines every soul, great and small, and all correspond to His care" (*Manuscript A*, 3f).

Finally, André, may I give you a piece of advice? Be very devoted to Our Lady! Place yourself in her hands, for She will guide you with her maternal care along the path to sanctity. ✠



GRACE AND THE SECRET OF MARY

When used in Theology, the word grace has a panoply of meanings. In Hebrew, it indicates a benevolent inclination toward someone. The Greek term *kháris* expresses both the fascination of beauty and favour, benefit or recognition. The Latin *gratia* adds, through its etymology, the connotations of gratuitousness and gratitude.

The Pauline epistles represent the pinnacle of Theology on grace. So elevated are the Apostle's considerations that St. Peter admits that "there are some things in them hard to understand" (2 Pt 3:16), according to the wisdom given to him. For St. Paul, the wisdom of God is hidden, for it contains depths penetrable only by the Paraclete Himself (cf. 1 Cor 2:6-10).

Starting from this biblical foundation, the scholastic philosophers defined grace as participation in divine life, but it seemed that something was missing... Indeed, how to discover the mysteries of grace?

St. Gabriel answered us when greeting his Queen: "Hail, full of grace!" (Lk 1:28). It is the only passage in all of Scripture in which an angelic spirit addresses someone not by their name, but by a title, expressing a reality that, in the original Greek, becomes even more perceptible: before God, the Virgin's name is *full of grace*.

With this greeting, the Archangel prefaced the moment, sublime above all others, in which the divinity would unite with humanity in the Person of the Son, effectuating in the womb of Mary the hypostatic union, the grace par excellence that St. Thomas Aquinas qualifies as "infinite, as the Person of God is infinite" (*Summa Theologiae*, III, q 7, a.11). Our Lady thus became the throne of grace, where Jesus Christ dwelt, from where He departed to redeem the universe, and from where He desires to reign.

The Mother of God carried within herself the grace of graces, the Word made flesh, and, assuming the role of mediatrix, delivered Him to the world as the remedy for its sins. But men, throughout the millennia, have rejected her... And for that very reason they plunge even deeper into the abysses from which they had emerged. It is therefore necessary for new graces to come, and they will come, as before, from the Heart of Mary, in which dwell unprecedented graces, which were granted only to God's chosen one.

In this sense, St. Louis Grignion de Montfort refers to the Secret of Mary, which would reveal a more special knowledge of the Blessed Virgin and the wonders worked by God in her. To find divine grace, it is necessary to find the Mother of God, for it was She who found grace before the Lord. As the Marian Saint asks, "Is it not fitting, remarks St. Bernard, that grace should return to its author by the same channel that conveyed it to us?" (*Secret of Mary*, n.35).

This secret does not consist simply in external acts, but above all in an interior posture, so as to accomplish all things with Mary, in Mary, through Mary and for Mary, and thus establish her own life in the soul.

Certain, therefore, that without grace we can do nothing, and assured of the omnipotence of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16). ✠



Our Lady of Graces - Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

Photo: Leandro Souza



Sons and Friends of God

Through the gift of grace man is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, a living temple of God. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to him and take up Their abode with him.

FROM THE BEGINNING, CALLED TO THE ORDER OF GRACE

The book of Genesis reveals to us not only the natural order of existence, but at the same time, right from the beginning, the supernatural order of grace. [...] Man is called to familiarity with God, to intimacy and friendship with Him. God wants to be close to him. He wants to make him a participant in His plans. He wants to make him a participant in His life. He wants to make him happy with His own happiness. [...]

We know that the first man, who enjoyed original innocence and the particular closeness of his Creator, did not show this availability. This first covenant of God with man was interrupted, but the will to save man did not cease on the part of God. The order of grace was not broken.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
General Audience, 13/12/1978

THE ADMIRABLE RESTORATION OF THE DIVINE PLAN

St. Athanasius explains that the Son of God became man so that man might be deified. [...] Divinization in no way implies the self-deification of man. On the contrary, divinization protects us from the primordial temptation to want to be like God (cf. Gen 3:5).

What Christ is by nature, we become by grace. Through the work of redemption, God not only restored our human dignity as His image, but the One who created us in a wondrous way, has now made us partakers in His divine nature in an even more wondrous way (cf. 2 Pet 1:4).

LEO XIV.
In unitate fidei, 23/11/2025

GRACE IS OBTAINED THROUGH BAPTISM

The name of Christ is very useful for obtaining the faith and sanctification wrought by Baptism, so much so that everyone who, wherever they may be, has been baptized in the name of Christ immediately receives the grace of Christ.

ST. STEPHEN I.
Letter to the Bishops of Asia Minor,
Year 256: DH 111

THE LIFE OF GRACE, THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

Sooner or later everything that begins on earth comes to its end, like the meadow grass that springs up in the morning and by evening has wilted. In Baptism, however, the tiny human being receives a new life, the life of grace, which enables him or her to enter into a personal relationship with the Creator for ever, for the whole of eternity. [...]

We all feel, we all inwardly comprehend that our existence is a desire for life which invokes fullness and salvation. This fullness is given to us in Baptism.

BENEDICT XVI.
Homily, 13/1/2008

LIVING IN GOD AND BY GOD

Through the gift of grace, which comes from the Holy Spirit, man enters a “new life,” is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, a living temple of God. For through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to him and take up Their abode with him. In the communion of grace with the Trinity, man’s “living area” is broadened and raised up to the supernatural level of divine life. Man lives in God and by God: he lives according to the Spirit, and sets his mind on the things of the Spirit.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Dominum et vivificantem, 18/5/1986

THE EXALTED DIGNITY OF REDEEMED MAN

When, furthermore, we consider man’s personal dignity from the standpoint of divine revelation, inevitably our estimate of it is incomparably increased. Men have been ransomed by

the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace has made them sons and friends of God, and heirs to eternal glory.

ST. JOHN XXIII.
Pacem in terris, 11/4/1963

A NEW INTERIOR ORGANISM

The whole Christian life develops in faith and charity, in the practice of all virtues, according to the intimate action of that renewing Spirit, from whom proceeds the grace that justifies, vivifies, and sanctifies; and with grace proceed the new virtues, which constitute the fabric of supernatural life.

This is the life that develops not only through the natural faculties of man – intelligence, will, sensibility – but also through the new capacities acquired – *superadditæ* – by means of grace, as St. Thomas Aquinas explains. They give [...] to all the powers of the soul, and in some way also of the body, the possibility of participating in the new life with acts worthy of the condition of men elevated to participation in the nature and the life of God through grace: “*consorte divinæ naturæ*”, as St. Peter affirms (2 Pet 1:4).

It is like a new interior organism, in which the law of grace manifests itself: a law written in hearts, more than on tablets of stone or on paper codices.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
General Audience, 3/4/1991

THE NEED TO COOPERATE WITH THE GRACE OF GOD

No one, of course, can deny that the Holy spirit of Jesus Christ is the one source of whatever supernatural powers enters into the Church and its members. For “The Lord will give grace and glory” as the Psalmist says (83:12). But that men should persevere constantly in their good works, that they

should advance eagerly in grace and virtue, that they should strive earnestly to reach the heights of Christian perfection and at the same time to the best of their power should stimulate others to attain the same goal, – all this the heavenly Spirit does not will to effect unless they contribute their daily share of zealous activity. “For divine favours are conferred not on those who sleep, but on those who watch,” as St. Ambrose says.

For if in our mortal body the members are strengthened and grow through continued exercise, much more truly can this be said of the social Body of Jesus Christ in which each individual member retains his own personal freedom, responsibility, and principles of conduct. For that reason he who said: “I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal 2, 20), did not at the same time hesitate to assert: “His [God’s] grace in me has not been void, but I have laboured more abundantly than all they: yet not I, but the grace of God with me” (1 Cor 15:10).

PIUS XII. *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 29/6/1943

FIRST AND FUNDAMENTAL CONDITION

Prayer is the first and fundamental condition for cooperating with the grace of God. It is necessary to pray in order to have God’s grace – and it is necessary to pray in order to cooperate with God’s grace.

Such is the true rhythm of the Christian’s interior life.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Angelus, 4/7/1982

HISTORY AWAITS THE TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD

Creation waits with impatience for the revelation that we are children of God, to be set free from bondage and obtain His splendour. Dear friends, we want to be these children of God for whom creation is waiting, and we can become them because the Lord has made us such in Baptism. Yes, creation and history – they are waiting for us, for men and women who are truly children of God and behave as such.

BENEDICT XVI.
Homily, 3/6/2006

Through the work of Redemption, God not only restored our human dignity as His image, but He has now made us partakers in His divine nature in an even more wondrous way

“Baptism of St. Francis”, by Antonio Viladomat - National Art Museum of Catalonia, Barcelona (Spain)





Peter's Tents



✠ Dcn. Francisco Javier de Oyarzábal, EP

*Like other
"Peters," we
often prefer
to build our
own tents in
this world,
rather than
becoming
temples
where God
can dwell*

Three Apostles and two prophets before God made Man, who on the summit of Mount Tabor shows Himself in all His splendour. This is the magnificent and sublime scene of the Transfiguration! An unfathomable spectacle, witnessed on earth by Peter, James, and John, and the representatives of the blessed, the great Moses and Elijah: "And He was transfigured before them; His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light" (Mt 17:2).

In the midst of the awe-inspiring vision and irresistibly drawn by it, the impetuous Peter exclaims: "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Mt 17:4). But soon the voice of the Father was heard, changing the courage of the Prince of the Apostles into doubt and fear, seeing his plans, as human as they were far-removed from the divine will, thwarted.

Falling, then, with his face to the ground, and thus prostrate beside the "sons of thunder" (Mk 3:17), he must have recalled in the depths of his heart the Master's rebuke: "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men" (Mk 8:33). Fear then invaded Peter's soul, as well as that of the sons of Zebedee, until Our Lord said to them: "Rise, and do not be afraid" (Mt 17:7).

Indeed, it was not the first time that fear had pervaded the Apostles' hearts. Let us recall, among others,

the episode at the Sea of Galilee, when they trembled upon seeing the Divine Master walking on the water while trying to calm them, saying: "Take heart, it is I; have no fear" (Mk 6:50).

Why tremble before Him who loved them so much and who had come to save them, promising them His own Kingdom?

Because, like Peter, the other Apostles were still seeking the Lord and His Kingdom in the world, in worldly glories and material concerns, when they should be doing so in their own souls: "the kingdom of God is among you" (Lk 17:21).

Indeed, whenever someone lets themselves be overcome by misfortune, allowing fear and lack of trust in God to invade their soul, it is because, like another Simon Peter, they have removed Our Lord from the centre, to erect the "tents" of selfishness, caprice, and ambition.

Jesus Christ did not need Peter's three tents, for the temples He sought were already there: they were the Apostles themselves!

What then did the Saviour desire? Only to dwell in their souls, so that they might become His instruments for the establishment of His eternal covenant, just as God had once established, through Moses, the Ark of the Covenant in the Tent of Meeting.

It is up to us to ask ourselves: would I rather build my tent in this world or be a temple where God can dwell? ✠



Francisco Lecaros

Transfiguration, by Pedro Serra -
Altarpiece of the Holy Spirit, Collegiate
Basilica of Santa Maria de la Aurora,
Manresa (Spain)

The Water of Life



✠ Fr. Dartagnan Alves, EP

The Gospel tells us that it was around noon when Jesus, tired from His journey, sat down by Jacob’s well. Seeing a Samaritan woman approaching to draw water, He asked her, “Give me a drink.”

Given the hostility between Jews and Samaritans, and having recognized that Our Lord was from the chosen people, the woman was surprised that He addressed her. The Master then replied, “If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water” (Jn 4:10).

After questioning Him about how He could give her water if He did not even have a bucket to draw it, the Samaritan woman heard Him reveal things about her life and understood that she was in the presence of the Messiah, hurrying to call other members of her people, who also believed in Him.

Stopping by Jacob’s well, Our Lord waited for the soul He wished to save to arrive, although that woman, by going to the place at a time when other people did not go there – so as not to cause scandal by her presence, since she lived in a state of sin – could not have imagined that the true Source of Life awaited her there.

How many of us, ashamed of our behaviour and forgetting that Jesus came into this world to enlighten those who walk in darkness (cf. Is 9:1), also doubt when He appears to satiate us!

The living water promised by the Divine Redeemer is that which quenches the thirst caused by worldly passions, which leads the soul to desire more and more from the source of sin, without ever satisfying its disorderly desires.

Sin attracts man who, always thirsty, murmurs against God, as the people of the Covenant once did against Moses: “Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst?” (Ex 17:3). As if the blame for the consequences of our sins belonged to the Lord, and not to our evil actions!

St. Augustine rightly affirms: “Thou have made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”¹ Thus, this Liturgy invites us to seek in the Fountain of Life the water that quenches the soul, rejecting the water of passions that corrupt the interior of man and distance him from eternal happiness.

Urged by the Divine Master to receive the water of life, the Samaritan woman was invited to abandon sin. Similarly, each of us, upon receiving the Redeemer, cannot nurture the desire to serve God and continue living in accordance with the spirit of the world.

Our great decision this Lent must be to reject sin, so that our thirst may be quenched by the living water. And, to reach it, it is enough to implore her who is our Mother, Mary Most Holy, who can lead us directly to the Fountain from which flows the water of eternal life. ✠

Prompted by the Divine Master to give Him a drink, the Samaritan woman herself receives the water of eternal life

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



Jesus with the Samaritan woman - Museum of Art and Archaeology, Valence (France)

Francisco Lecaros

No One Can Deceive God



Fr. César Javier Díez, EP

God sees the interior; let us prepare ourselves this Lent to have a pure heart, full of intentions that are pleasing to Him

The 4th Sunday of Lent is called *Lætare* Sunday – that is, “Rejoice” – as, with more than half of this penitential season having passed, the Church provides us with a brief respite in order to anticipate the graces of the Redemption that is at hand, announced by the entrance antiphon: “Rejoice with Jerusalem, all you who love her.”

But this is a joy that we can only achieve if we align our criteria with God’s. And that is why the Liturgy invites us to be vigilant so as never to deceive ourselves, following the norms and superficialities of the world. The readings show us a very clear contrast between appearances and the truth of the heart, light and darkness, physical blindness and spiritual blindness.

In the first reading, God wishes to educate His prophet and warns him not to focus on outward appearances, because “the Lord looks into the heart” (1 Sam 16:7). And Samuel adapts to His will.

In the second reading, St. Paul urges us to discern what pleases the Most High, unmasking the works of darkness and separating ourselves from them (cf. Eph 5:11). Only in this way will we bear fruit befitting children of light: goodness, justice, and truth (cf. Eph 5:9).

The Gospel contrasts the attitude of the Pharisees – who see the material world but perceive nothing in the supernatural realm – with that of a beggar blind from birth, to whom Our Lord not only restores physical sight but also grants spiritual sight.

In front of the people, the Pharisees knew how to surround themselves with a halo of apparent virtue and justice that did not correspond to their interior, a stratagem that blinded their hearts and prevented them from adapting to divine criteria. Thus, they end up judging the miracles performed by Our Lord as transgressions against Mosaic Law (cf. Jn 9:16).

The man blind from birth, on the contrary, thanks to the uprightness of his heart, defends the One who healed him and gives courageous testimony before the Pharisees, without human respect or fear of being punished with the penalty of exclusion from the Jewish community: “If this

Man were not from God, He would not be able to do anything”

(Jn 9:33). This attitude of being a child of light was rewarded by Jesus, who opened his eyes of faith so that, prostrating before Him, he would recognize Him as the expected Messiah.

The examples in the readings offer us a good opportunity to make a serious examination of conscience and, in this way, face the second stage of Lent by asking ourselves: Do I seek to adapt my way of life to the moral principles of the

Church? What is my attitude when these principles oppose my customs? Do I prefer not to know them in depth, so that my conscience does not accuse me?

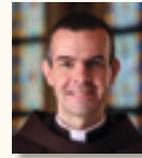
Let us be like the prophet Samuel and allow ourselves to be educated by the Divine Master; let us abandon everything that hinders our union with Him, be it customs, criteria, human respect... Then we can truly rejoice and enjoy the graces proper to this *Lætare* Sunday. ✚



Prophet Samuel, by Claude Vignon – Museum of Fine Arts, Rouen (France)

Francisco Lecaros

True Surrender into God's Hands



✚ Fr. Leandro Cesar Ribeiro, EP

If we had the possibility of rewriting history, would it be similar to that which was written by God? Probably not, for He has unfathomable designs that are often difficult for our limited intelligence to comprehend... How many times have we heard the proverb that “God writes straight with crooked lines”? In reality, the Lord always writes straight with straight lines; it is we who see crookedly. Everything He does, however incomprehensible it may seem at first glance, hides wonders of His infinite wisdom.

An example of this reality is found in the Gospel of this 5th Sunday of Lent, in which the greatest miracle performed by Our Lord, after His own Resurrection, is recounted: the resurrection of Lazarus. If we were given the grace to be present at that sublime event with the possibility of rewriting it according to our criteria, things would undoubtedly have happened in a much less glorious way.

Let us imagine the distress of Martha and Mary as they watched death approach their sick brother, and, having called upon Our Lord, the days passed without the Master attending to them. How many strangers were healed by Jesus, and inexplicably He refused to assist one of His best friends... If we could change the course of events, it is quite likely that the Redeemer would have healed him from a distance or, at least, hurried to him.

That is not what happened. Jesus let the days pass and waited for his friend to die, not because He rejected him, but to have the opportunity to manifest the fullness of His love for him.

For Lazarus, not just any miracle was in store, but the greatest of miracles: the Saviour would awaken him from the sleep of death after four days, manifesting His divinity as never before.

This attitude of Our Lord is frequently repeated in our lives. On many occasions, events do not follow the direction we expect, and some-

times even head in the diametrically opposite direction. How do I react to these setbacks? Do I enthusiastically accept God's design, or is my attitude one of rebellion because He is not doing my will?

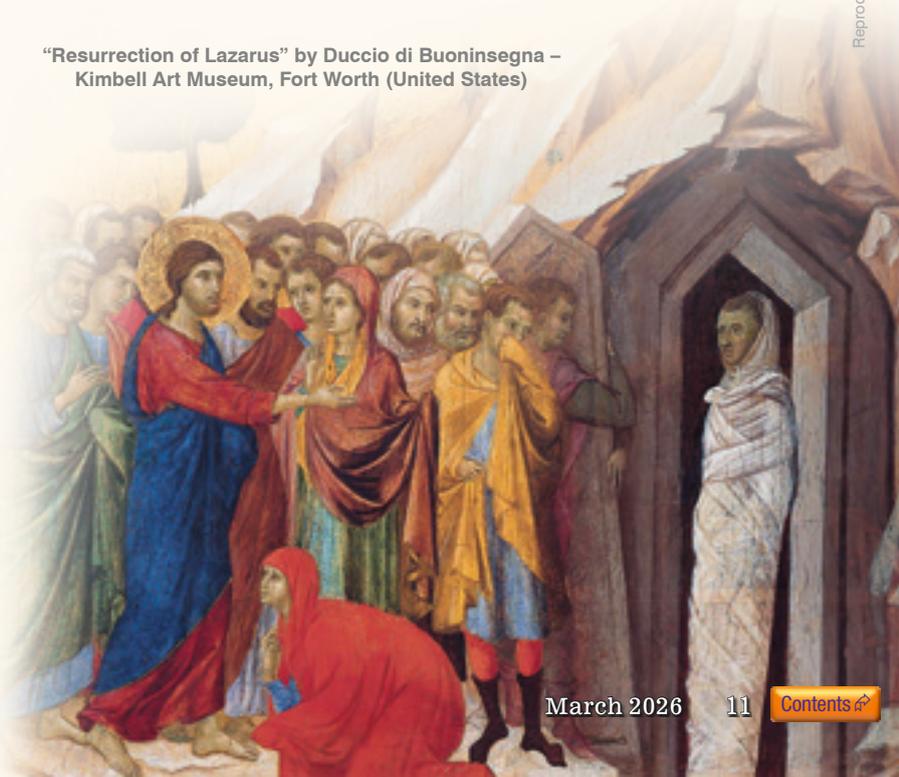
Humanity today lives far from the Lord, and therefore it becomes increasingly difficult to conform to His designs. How many contemporary pathologies would be cured simply if people accepted the divine will with love?

The wonders that God has in store for each of us are extraordinary, but they are not always consonant with our imperfect desires, which are fruits of a disordered will.

To truly fulfil our calling, we must have the humility to accept the design of the Almighty concerning us, and not seek to accomplish what we conceive according to our own criteria. By acting in this way, we will truly be in God's hands and will have found the path to true happiness. ✚

If Lazarus' healing depended on us, would we have acted as Our Lord did? Certainly not, and everything would have turned out less gloriously!

“Resurrection of Lazarus” by Duccio di Buoninsegna – Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth (United States)



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Let Us Not Harden Our Hearts



✠ Fr. Francisco Berrizbeitia, EP

The contrast between the acclamations of Palm Sunday and the cries of condemnation uttered a few days later reminds us that superficiality must not take root in our souls

The Liturgy of Palm Sunday, with its procession and Mass, presents us with two Gospels in which the glory and the Passion of Christ come face to face, inviting us to meditate on these lofty mysteries as preparation for the Easter Triduum.

Our Lord chooses the Holy City as the stage for the dramatic episodes of Redemption: “Exult greatly, [...] O daughter Jerusalem! Behold: your king is coming to you, a just saviour is he, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zec 9:9). There Jesus is received and acclaimed to the sound of songs and praises: “Hosanna” – redemption, in Hebrew¹ – “to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Mt 21:9). Some spread their cloaks, others cut branches from trees and scattered them on the road to show their joy. What the Pharisees, doctors, and authorities of the Sanhedrin had denied Him, the multitude proclaims, shaking the city to its foundations.

However, Jerusalem lay in the darkness of mediocrity and worldliness. The Temple had become a

den of thieves, the priesthood had divided into factions, the people had lost hope in the coming of the Messiah. They only wanted a leader who would deliver them from Roman rule and make them masters of the world. For this reason, they went from the acclamations of Palm Sunday to the cries of condemnation of Good Friday because, as Isaiah prophesied, they had God on their lips, but not in their hearts (Is 29:13).

The Evangelist tells us a detail that does not go unnoticed. On two occasions, the Holy City was shaken by the presence of the Messiah. On the occasion of His birth, when the Magi arrived asking: “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Mt 2:2). And in the episode we celebrate today: “And when He entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken and asked, ‘Who is this?’ And the crowds replied, ‘This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee’” (Mt 21:10-11).

The presence of Our Lord was a rebuke to the unbelief, vices, and hardness of heart of those Jews. And for this reason, they supported the conspiracy of their leaders. Little did they know that they were unmasking themselves, showing an irrational and satanic hatred. With the death of the Redeemer, the authentic separation took place: “The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised” (Mt 27:51-52). The barren fig tree was uprooted, and in its place sprouted the seed born from the side of Christ: the Holy Catholic Church.

Let us pray – through the merits of the Passion of Christ and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy – for the grace to always be attentive to what They ask of us and never harden our hearts with the allurements of the world or the mediocrity of daily life. ✠



Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem - National Museum in Warsaw (Poland)

¹ Cf. ST. HILARY OF POITIERS. *Comentario al Evangelio de Mateo*, c.XXI, n.3. Madrid: BAC, 2010, p. 265.

A “NO” FROM GOD THAT BECAME A HEROIC SAGA

The route was planned: from Poitiers he would go to Lyon; from there he would cross Piedmont to reach Bologna, Rimini, Loreto and, finally, the much-desired Rome. And from the Eternal City he would go to Canada, Japan or any other remote part of the world where no one had heard of Jesus and His Mother. The apostolic zeal of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort had found no faster and more direct way to achieve his missionary hopes.

It was a fast and direct path, yes, but not at all straight or easy. The young priest would be exposed to the attacks of men and the weather, to humiliations, to the most dire poverty and to physical and psychological exhaustion. But he did not care! The scorn of the clergy, the distrust of the people, the nights spent under the cold starlight: none of this would prevent him from addressing the Holy Father, to speak to him about the conquest of the pagan world for the Holy Church. France, his homeland, did not want to hear him; he would then turn to the Gentiles, to the immense multitude of peoples yet to be baptized.

With such intentions, Father Louis-Marie finally entered Rome. A few days later, on June 6, 1706, Pope Clement XI received the pilgrim and listened with pleasure to his fervent dissertation. He spoke to

the Vicar of Christ about the Chinese who had never heard the Gospel, about the Holy Places of Jerusalem that lacked worthy souls to venerate them, about the immense Canada that awaited more preachers...

While Father Louis-Marie was speaking, the Roman Pontiff smiled, because he saw in him a man sent

“You have”, replied the Pope at the end of Father Louis-Marie’s words, “a very large field in France to exercise your zeal; you need not go anywhere else.” The fiery priest bowed his head and, doubling his enthusiasm, obeyed.

God had placed within St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort ardent desires to fight for the conversion of souls. And the Saint had interpreted the divine voice as a call to distant missions. When, however, he heard the Holy Father’s order, he did not take it as contrary to the Lord’s promises. Rather, he subjected his criteria to the ineffable judgments of the Almighty. There was some magnificent and unknown design in this.

He therefore bravely embarked on an apostolate among his countrymen, especially in the Vendée and Brittany. And, had he lived there until the end of the century, he would have seen the august intention of God fulfilled through that apparent misapprehension. Indeed, it was only in those regions that the French Revolution encountered fearless and organized opposition. Only from the soil watered by the preachings of St. Louis did resistance spring forth against that eruption of atheism that persecuted the Church and expelled God from the altar. Only there was an epic Christian saga of heroism and suffering written. ✦



Suppressing his own criteria, Saint Louis courageously devoted himself to the apostolate among his compatriots

The preaching of Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort - Church of Saint Peter, Domagné (France)

by Providence to... France, where heresy and schism were rampant. Jansenism had firmly established itself there, separating the faithful from Jesus in the Eucharist, and Gallicanism threatened to separate the French nation from the Roman Church. The battlefield was therefore not Lapland, Mongolia, or Indonesia.



Elevation to Divine Life

Grace is a free gift, a divine present superior to all the created natural order. Through it we are elevated from the merely human plane to the category of deified beings.

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

I remember the first conversation about spiritual life that I had with Dr. Plinio, in 1959, when I was still very young and asked him for advice to help me decide which career I should pursue.

Dr. Plinio arranged to meet me at five o'clock in the afternoon, at his law office. When I arrived, I found him sitting in an armchair in the entrance hall, speaking with two gentlemen. We greeted each other and he invited me to wait in the next room.

I went in and began to follow the conversation from a distance, which revolved around a topic that I didn't know about at the time, but which caught my attention: grace.

A mystery revealed by the God-Man

They were discussing whether grace can be found in purely material objects, such as an environment like the *Sainte Chapelle*, or whether it is only for man and Angels, that is, for intelligent beings. And Dr. Plinio posed a series of questions: "What does it mean to participate in the divine nature? How does this participation occur?" Until one of his interlocutors exclaimed: "Plinio, this won't do... You want to unravel all the mysteries that exist!" He, however, replied: "No, I want to take my knowledge as far as human intelligence can comprehend!"

When you are young, events mark a strong impression, and I remember thinking: "One day I will study this

subject, because it seems extremely interesting!" In fact, the episode broadened my horizons to later explore such a wonderful and fundamental topic, to the point that much later, in 1990, Dr. Plinio had several conversations with me to delve deeper into the subject.

"Participation in the divine nature": he reflected repeatedly on this point his entire life. He had faith, but he wanted to obtain an exact explanation, because he wished to give conferences and even offer a course on such a fundamental subject – which he had never had the opportunity to study in depth, due to lack of time – knowing that it would do good to souls.

Now, grace is a completely inaccessible mystery that, if it had not been revealed by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the New Testament, no one would be able to fathom. And even after it was revealed, a certain

shadow still hangs over it that we cannot penetrate: "I am a child of God?..."

While we are on this earth, it is therefore important to concern ourselves with the great horizons of the supernatural world and to seek to explore the explanations made by good Theology, to the point that it has reached.

To each nature correspond proportional strengths...

The Christian is accustomed to the name "child of God," and it would be almost an offence to deny him this title. But, in reality, the fact of being produced by someone does not confer the right of filiation. A watchmaker who makes a watch or a carpenter who makes furniture cannot call the works of their hands "son." To be a son, it is necessary that the father transmit, through natural generation, his own life and nature. The young of lions are lion cubs, and the sons of men are men.

We know that in the order of nature there are minerals, plants, animals, men, and Angels; and on a higher level there is the supernatural plane of grace and, after that, that of the hypostatic union. However, above all creation is the divine nature, which is defined by God's capacity to understand Himself as He is and to love Himself because of His deity.

The mineral nature is characterized by perennity; however, it is inanimate. Plants have life and a certain movement in search of sun, water, and nutrients. Animal nature presents a higher

Grace is an inaccessible mystery which, had it not been revealed by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, no one would be able to fathom

degree of life, as defined by sensitivity. Human nature, in turn, has the use of reason and will. And angelic nature, endowed with great intelligence and power superior to that of men, is distinguished by being purely spiritual.

Consequently, the strengths of a being are proportionate to the nature it possesses. How could we ask an animal to solve a philosophical problem? It would be absurd, as it would never have the capacity for this!

Likewise, the strengths of a man or an Angel will never be divine, but always purely human or angelic.

...and an equivalent reward

Likewise, the reward that can be achieved must be proportionate to the strengths that merit it. It would make no sense to reward with an intellectual prize the physical efforts of carrying burdens performed by an elephant, since the animal could not benefit from this, as its nature does not permit.

Similarly, the reward that man may obtain for his natural actions, even if he zealously and heroically fulfils all the Commandments or undergoes the greatest torments and sacrifices, will never be a divine reward nor will it have absolutely any value for eternal life,¹ since his mere nature is incapable of deserving anything in the supernatural order.

Heaven consists, above all, in seeing God face to face; and no created

being, not even an Angel in its fullest power, would ever have the possibility of knowing Him and enjoying His vision, unless a supernatural gift were granted to him.

Only sanctifying grace elevates us to that happiness that God had reserved for Himself, but wished to extend to rational creatures.

A historical fact is told about Michelangelo, who, upon finishing his famous sculpture of Moses, was so enraptured by his work that he struck one of the statue's knees with a hammer, saying: "*Parla! Perché non parla? – Speak! Why don't you speak?*" The Renaissance genius, considered one of the greatest artists in history, could not transfer his human nature to the marble he had sculpted.

God, however, was far more enthusiastic than Michelangelo about the image He made of Himself and loved man immeasurably. So He was not content to leave him in the state of a mere likeness and wished to transmit to him His own divine nature.

What is sanctifying grace?

How can He divinize us? Through sanctifying grace, a created gift that,

upon penetrating the soul, elevates it to the divine category, for it essentially sanctifies those who receive it.

There was not a moment in which Adam and Eve, coming from the hands of God, remained as mere creatures and outside the state of grace. According to Catholic doctrine, when God breathed on the clay figure, He infused it at once with both lives, the natural and the supernatural. And He did the same when He formed Eve from Adam's rib.

Both, however, sinned, and it was necessary for Christ Our Lord to be born in the manger in Bethlehem and to accomplish Redemption, restoring supernatural life through the Sacraments.

Grace is a free gift, a divine present superior to all the created natural order. If we were to add up all the topazes and other precious stones, the stars, the eagles and so many other beautiful animals, men and Angels, all these creatures together would equal nothing compared to a "drop" of grace.

Thus affirms St. Thomas: "the gift of grace surpasses every capability of created nature, since it is nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature, which exceeds every other nature."²

If we were to add up all the precious stones, the stars, the animals, men and angels, all creatures together would equal nothing compared to a "drop" of grace.



Giles Laurent (CC by-sa 4.0)

Santiago Vileto

Alexander Kurilov (CC by-sa 4.0)

Iron or fire?

To explain how this participation occurs, the Angelic Doctor offers a very compelling example: if we take an iron bar at room temperature and place it in a forge for a certain time, when we remove it, it comes out incandescent and even in flames, to the point that we cannot touch the iron with our hands because they would burn as if they were directly touching the fire. What happened? The fire transmitted its heat to the iron, and the iron, without ceasing to be metal, acquired all the properties of fire.

Something analogous happens to the soul when it receives grace: it remains entirely human, but a divine quality is added to it, which gives it a real, authentic, and true participation in the very nature of God; which means having the possibility of seeing Him as He sees Himself, of loving Him as He loves Himself, and of enjoying Him as He enjoys Himself. Through this “ray” of grace, the Lord elevates us to a higher plane, so that we are no longer mere creatures, but pass into the category of deified beings.

Scheeben, a great 19th-century German theologian, summarizes this truth thus: “divine nature, by the infinite power of its charity, attracts our nature, adopts it into its bosom by grace, submerging it in itself as iron is submerged in fire. We belong, then, to the race of God, as the palm tree belongs to the plant kingdom, and the lion to the animal kingdom.”³

Just as, when we look at a tree, we immediately understand that it is part of the plant nature, or when we see a puppy, we know that it belongs to the

animal kingdom; when we contemplate someone whose soul is in the state grace, such as a newly baptized child, we should say: “Here is a saint. He is divine, and belongs to the Kingdom of God!”

Children of God...

What are the consequences of this? Undoubtedly, the main effect of grace consists in conferring participation in the nature of God. But from this flow other riches of the greatest importance.

If, as we commented above, a child is one who receives the same nature as the father, those who possess grace can truly say: “We are God’s children” (1 Jn 3:2).

This divine filiation through grace should not be confused with the natural filiation of the Word in the bosom of the Father, for only Our Lord Jesus Christ is begotten by nature, as we pray in the Creed when we call Him the Only Begotten Son. We, however, are children by adoption.

However, the term *adopted child* may give the impression of referring to a mere legal adoption, whose value is

comparable to that made by means of a document at the notary’s office. It is not because a German boy was adopted by Chinese parents that he will take on Chinese features and mentality. The child will grow up German and will always remain so within the Chinese family.

With grace, something much more effective happens: from the moment it penetrates the soul, it causes the soul to take on the form of God. And that is why Theology teaches that it is a *physical* and *formal* participation in divine life. Grace is not a garment placed on our body, but a quality that clothes us from within and transforms us.

Theologians seek to illustrate this mystery using the following image: it is an adoption so profound and intrinsic that it would be more or less as if all the blood were taken from the child and he were transfused with the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

...and His heirs

Another necessary consequence of our adoptive divine filiation is that we become heirs of God, as St. Paul

*Just as iron acquires
the properties
of fire when placed
in the forge, so too
does the soul become
divinized upon
receiving grace*

On the right, detail from “The Coronation of the Virgin” by Fra Angelico – Uffizi Gallery, Florence (Italy)



writes in his Letter to the Romans (cf. Rom 8:17).

Returning to the metaphor of the Chinese couple, let us suppose that, in addition to the adopted German child, they had ten children. When the parents died, their possessions would be divided among the eleven, with a small and equal share remaining for each. Such is the division of inheritance among merely human or legal siblings.

The divine inheritance is distributed in a very different way: since God does not die, and since what He has to give us is infinite, we will possess with Him an inheritance so rich that, despite the immense number of His children, it will never decrease, for it is the same prize that God has reserved for Himself from all eternity: to see Him as He sees Himself, and to love Him as He loves Himself.

Therefore, having crossed the threshold of death, soon after the Judgment we will see the Lord face to face and enjoy the absolute happiness of being with God and in God, as He has the happiness of being in Himself and of being who He is.

We will then reach the consummation of the state of grace, for grace and glory are substantially the same life, with only a difference in degree: the first in the state of a seed – inchoative, as Theology calls it – and the second in fullness, just as a child is an adult in germ. In this sense, St. Thomas Aquinas affirms: “grace is nothing else than a beginning of glory in us.”¹

Moreover, all our longings will be fulfilled, everything we desire and aspire to will be satisfied.

Brothers of Jesus Christ

There are many other effects of sanctifying grace, such as that of giving us supernatural life, making us



Magazine Archive

Msgr. João in June, 2005

Sanctifying grace unites us intimately with God, making us living temples of the Blessed Trinity and brothers and sisters of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

righteous and pleasing to God, conferring upon us the capacity for supernatural merit, uniting us intimately to God, and making us living temples of the Blessed Trinity. But there is one to which St. Paul alludes several times in his epistles (cf. Rom 8:17, 29; Heb 2:11) and which would be enough to make us mad with love: we are brothers of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

Imagine that someone introduced us to a prince of great elegance and charm. Certainly, we would be impressed and would greet him with

great deference. However, much more is given to us, for we relate to each other as brothers of Our Lord Jesus Christ. How we should love one another and be willing to do everything for each other!

This would be enough for each of us, when meeting another and knowing that, by the mercy of God, this person remains in a state of grace, to treat him with profound respect and genuflect before him because divine life is present. To have genuine mutual love, we must love one another deeply, from the heart. (Cf. 1 Pt 1:22). ✠

Excerpts from oral expositions given between 1993 and 2006

¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.114, a.2.

² Idem, q.112, a.1.

³ SCHEEBEN, Matthias Joseph. *As maravilhas da graça divina*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1952, p.29.

⁴ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., II-II, q.24, a.3, ad 2.

New Life, New Level of Action

Sanctifying grace develops in our souls through the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which, together with it, constitute the foundation of our supernatural organism.



✦ Larissa Saraiva

From the very beginning of creation, to be like God was a profound longing of man, made in His image and likeness. However, pride blinded our first parents – and, in them, all of humanity – distorting this salutary yearning in their souls. Their first movements to imitate the Lord, with a view to union with Him, degenerated into the pretension of equaling themselves to divinity in order to emancipate themselves from it. Then the Serpent came on the scene and fascinated them with the invitation: “You will be like God” (Gn 3:5).

In His unfathomable designs, however, the Heavenly Father once again placed at our disposal, by virtue of the infinite merits of the Redemption wrought by Our Lord Jesus Christ, effective and superabundant means to attain true deification. This begins in us at the moment of Baptism, when an authentic supernatural organism is infused into our soul.

A new life corresponds to a new mode of action

To better understand such a sublime reality, let us consider man’s own natural life, for although supernatural life is infinitely superior to it, “it is not simply superimposed on it, but rather completely penetrates, transforms, and divinizes it.”¹ We can thus identify a profound analogy between the two.

In the natural order, the soul is the source of life. However, it is not immediately operative, that is, it does not perform acts by itself; to act, it makes use of its faculties – understanding, will, and sensibility. Something similar can be said of the spiritual order: to develop, sanctifying grace needs operative habits – the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit – which, together with it, constitute the foundation of our supernatural organism.²

To use an image, just as a healthy person possesses, in addition to a head and torso, limbs that allow them to move and act, the soul divinized by grace possesses virtues and gifts, which are like arms and legs that impart to it the possibility of acting, in due proportion, like God Himself.

In short, while we receive through sanctifying grace a new way of being, through virtues and gifts we acquire a new way of acting, that is, the capacity to produce supernatural and meritorious acts before the Lord.

The infused virtues: the path to holiness

“All good things came to me along with her, and in her hands uncounted wealth” (Wis 7:11). This statement from Scripture, referring to wisdom, can well be applied to sanctifying grace, through which we receive the magnificent treasure of the virtues. Catholic

doctrine divides them into two categories: theological and moral.

The theological virtues, which give life to all the others, are three: faith, hope, and charity. They concern union with God, our ultimate supernatural end, and place us in constant relationship with the Holy Trinity.

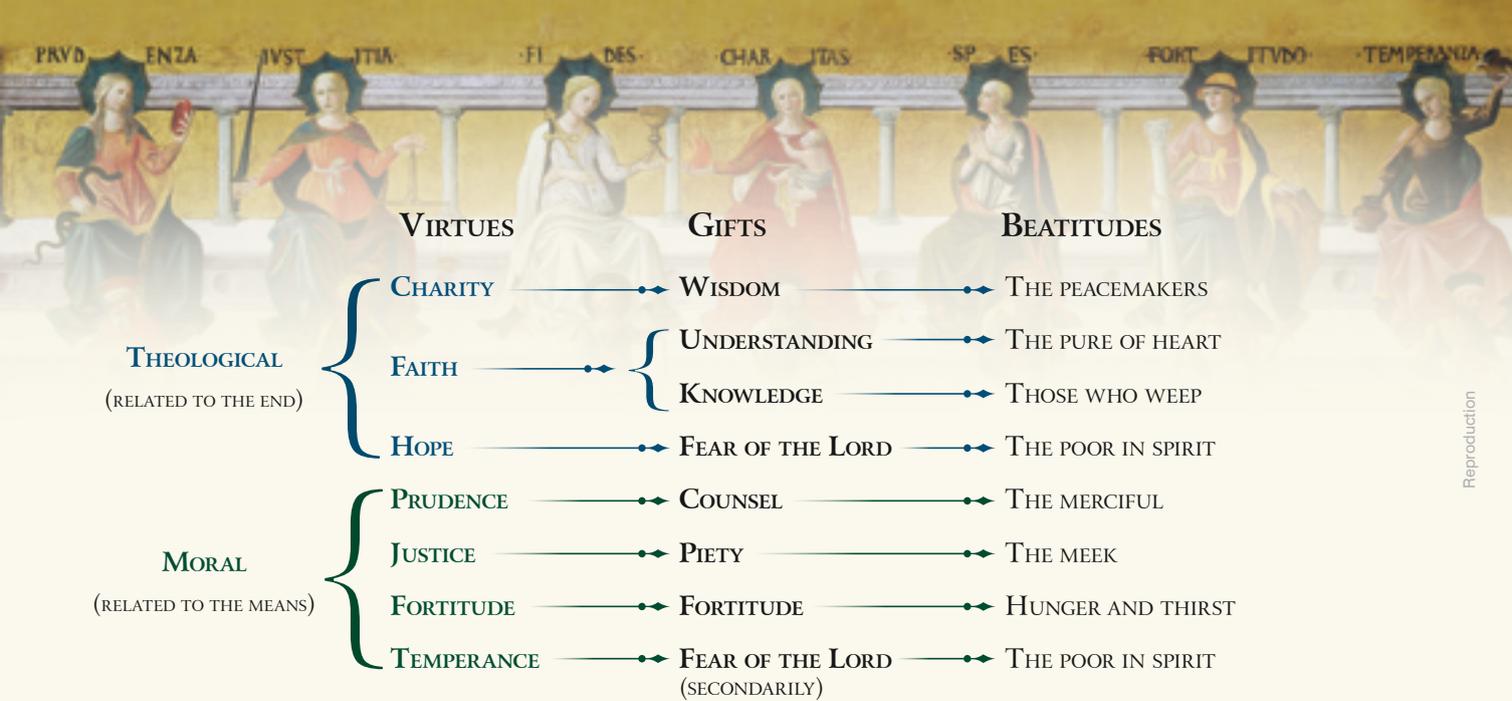
As for our relationship with our neighbour, the beautiful moral virtues come into play, which Theology summarizes into four main ones, called the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They allow us to live in this world in accordance with our highest condition as children of God, heirs of the heavenly Kingdom.

Now, the way virtues are exercised is not yet the most excellent, for what governs and regulates their practice is human reason illuminated by faith;³ and the contribution of this faculty of ours is not sufficient to manifest all the splendour of the divine life we have received. This perfection, therefore, must be brought about by the infused gifts.

A “harp” played by the Holy Spirit

Unlike the virtues, in the case of the gifts it is the Holy Spirit who acts⁴ leaving man with only a secondary role. Thus, the acts resulting from these supernatural powers have a much more divine than human quality.

Contrary to what many think, the most excellent actions are not those derived from the ascetic practice of vir-



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tues, but rather those proceeding from gifts, for these are the work of God, and holiness consists in allowing oneself to be guided by these divine promptings. Whoever lives in this way is perfect in everything just as the Heavenly Father is perfect (cf. Mt 5:48), and could well repeat like St. Paul: “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

An example given by Fr. Antonio Royo Marín, OP, well illustrates the superiority of gifts and how they perfect and complete virtues. According to the eminent theologian, these latter virtues resemble a harp given to the soul so that it may play harmonious compositions, which would be supernatural acts. He explains:

“Since the artist who wields it – natural reason – is very clumsy and short-sighted, even under the light of faith, the result is a discordant and imperfect melody. [...] Until the moment arrives when the Holy Spirit himself plays the harp of infused virtues, through the

gifts of the same Holy Spirit, and from the soul emanates a most beautiful, absolutely *divine* melody, which is nothing other than the acts of perfect and heroic virtue of the true saints.”⁵

Infused habits and beatitudes

As a result, when the soul is docile to the promptings of the Paraclete, it produces acts of exquisite virtue, like sweet and gentle fruits.⁶ Some of these are mentioned by St. Paul in his Letter to the Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (cf. Gal 5:22-23).

Through these fruits we also attain the beatitudes mentioned by Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. These crown the supernatural life and, “by virtue of the ineffable rewards that accompany them, are already in this life an anticipation of eternal blessedness.”⁷

St. Thomas Aquinas establishes an interesting correspondence between

the infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the evangelical beatitudes. The virtue of charity, for example, is perfected by the gift of wisdom, which includes us among the peacemakers, worthy of being called children of God (cf. Mt 5:9). Hope, in turn, is refined by the gift of fear, which makes us poor in spirit, possessors of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Mt 5:3). And so on.

Love is repaid with love

A careful look at the wonders God works in our favour at the moment of our Baptism is enough to leave us astonished with joy, rapture, and gratitude.

For love is repaid with love. The Lord expects no other gratitude from us than that we love Him with all our hearts. And to love Him means to develop our supernatural life to the fullest and to become ever more godlike.

May Mary Most Holy, Mother of Divine Grace, intercede for us on this journey towards eternity and obtain for us a crystalline holiness. ✠

¹ TANQUEREY, Adolphe. *Compêndio de Teologia Ascética e Mística*. 6.ed. Porto: Apostolado da Imprensa, 1961, p.53.

² Cf. GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, OP, Réginald. *Las*

tres edades de la vida interior. 3.ed. Buenos Aires: Desclée de Brouwer, 1944, p.58.

³ Cf. ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *Teología de la perfección cristiana*. Madrid: BAC, 2012, p.97.

⁴ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.68, a.1.

⁵ ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *Jesucristo y la vida cristiana*. Madrid: BAC, 1961, p.424.

⁶ Cf. SÃO TOMÁS DE AQUINO, op. cit., q.70, a.1, ad 1.

⁷ ROYO MARÍN, *Jesucristo y la vida cristiana*, op. cit., p.157.

Everything is Grace!

If we learn to listen to God’s voice in the silence of our interior, we will see how, at every moment, we are being inspired by grace to a greater union with Him.



✦ Gabriel Denkwicz

“If one morning you find me dead, do not be sad: it is simply that the Good God the Father has come to take me. Without a doubt, it is a great grace to receive the Sacraments; but, when God does not permit it, it is good as well. Everything is grace.”¹ These words of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, spoken four months before her death, shed light on one of the greatest mysteries of Christian life. Indeed, for the baptized person there is no destiny, no omens, no luck or misfortune. There is, rather, the Providence of God, which guides us in all things, great or small, with His omnipotent hand.

In the Christian life “everything is grace,” because everything is providential. But also “everything is grace” because the divine aids we receive are

greater and more numerous than we imagine... We would be astonished if we could see the graces that God grants us day and night: these are the so-called *actual graces*.

Energy that moves the supernatural organism

First of all, it is necessary to establish a distinction: although actual grace is intimately united with habitual or sanctifying grace, one should not be confused with the other.

The latter, as seen in the preceding articles, is a divine gift that makes man participate in divine life itself. Through sanctifying grace, we become members of God’s family, His children and intimate friends, and we receive as a

benefit all the infused gifts and virtues. But these gifts and virtues need to be set in motion, and for this, there are actual graces: momentary illuminations or dispositions that set the supernatural organism of the soul in motion. Their role is similar to the electric current that illuminates the light bulbs of a beautiful crystal chandelier.

Habitual grace is static and ordered to being; actual grace is dynamic and relates to the operation of that same being. Fr. Antonio Royo Marín, OP, defines the latter as follows: it is “a supernatural, interior, and transitory aid, by which God illuminates our understanding and strengthens our will to perform supernatural acts.”²

But, as previously stated, actual graces are varied. Therefore, they do

Actual graces are momentary illuminations or dispositions that are able to set the supernatural organism of the soul in motion

not operate in the soul in a univocal manner.

By sailing or by rowing?

Actual graces can be divided into cooperative and operative graces, according to their mode of action.

Cooperative graces are those in which the soul is moved by God, but also moves itself to the practice of good, cooperating with the divine aid. Operative graces, on the other hand, are those whose action proceeds exclusively from God: the soul is thus moved to perform good without any effort other than that of allowing itself to be led.

An example given by Msgr. João illustrates this division well. Cooperative actual grace is like a ship that, on a completely calm sea, needs to be propelled forward by the use of oars. Operative grace resembles the same vessel, but gliding across the ocean with its sails billowing in a strong wind; it moves along without any effort on the part of the crew.

That is why Msgr. João always urged his spiritual children to pray fervently, although always docile to the Lord's designs, asking for Him to guide them through abundant operative graces. If God is our Father, why would He not give us such graces from His infinite treasure? It is good, and even indispensable, to ask for graces; it is a condition for obtaining them in greater abundance.

Moreover, the more frequently we receive the Sacraments and the deeper our prayer life – and this is already a grace that we should ask for – the more numerous and greater graces we will receive, not because we deserve them, but by the pure gratuitousness of God who, exalting our merits, crowns His own gifts in us.³ Catholic doctrine teaches that in no way do we deserve any grace; however, we can obtain them through humble and confident prayer, as Our Lord Himself prom-



“A galley of Malta”, by Laureys a Castro - Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

Reproduction

Cooperative grace is like a boat that needs the use of oars to set it in motion, while operative grace is like one propelled by the wind filling its sails

ises: “Ask, and it will be given you” (Mt 7:7).

Actual graces: why and how to receive them?

We often receive abundant graces without realizing it. This is because our pride leads us to attribute to ourselves a role that, in reality, is minimal or non-existent compared to the action of grace. We overcome a defect, perform an act of charity, suppress our impatience, begin to pray more frequently and devoutly... and we think that everything is due to our generous efforts. We do not perceive that an invisible hand sustains us in

the practice of good, often without us even asking.

In fact, receiving actual graces does not necessarily require that the soul be in a state of grace. If that were the case, we would never be able to rise again after committing a serious sin.

Yes, the conversion of the sinner is an outstanding grace. For St. Thomas,⁴ the greatest work of God.

We are once again face to face with the awe-inspiring mystery of the mercy of God, who hates sin but loves the sinner and wants him to repent and have life (cf. Jn 3:16).

Between laxism and rigorism

But then, if grace does everything... where do our efforts fit in?

This was a problem that the Church had to address from very early on. Regarding the role of grace in human life, two heretical positions emerged, in broad terms.

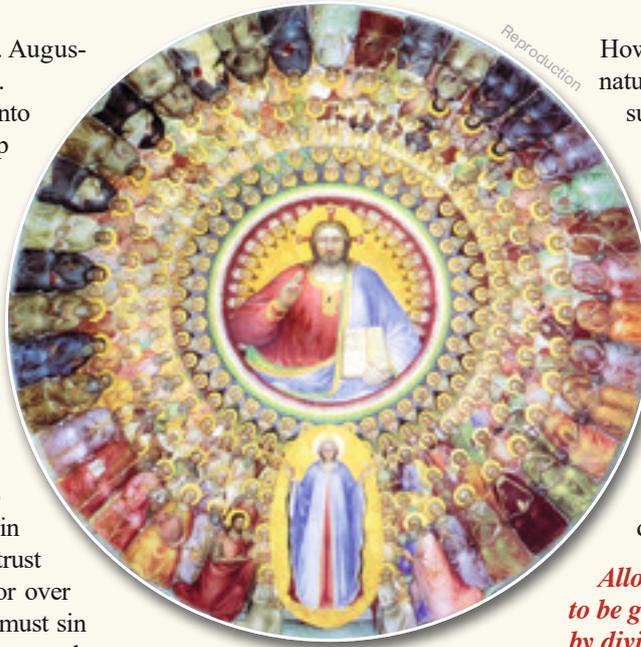
The first affirmed the total or relative uselessness of grace compared to human efforts. This current included the Pelagians, for example, who considered grace only as an aid that makes virtue easier, and believed that without it man could fulfil all the Divine Com-

mandments. Against these, St. Augustine had to wage fierce battles.

Others, however, falling into the opposite extreme, ended up dispensing with the role of effort and asceticism, in order to cast themselves without remorse of conscience into the mire of sin. For Luther, for example, justification would occur through faith, independent of works, through the merits of the Passion of Christ. Hence the Protestant leader even went so far as to say: “Be a sinner, and sin boldly, but even more firmly trust and rejoice in Christ, the victor over sin, death, and the world. We must sin while we live here. [...] It is enough that through the riches of glory we have known the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Sin will not separate us from Him, even if we commit a thousand murders and a thousand adulteries a day.”⁵

Obviously, neither position represents the Church’s view.

St. Augustine⁶ affirms that, without grace, it is not possible for us to do good integrally, whether by thought, desire, or action. But how can we explain that evil men, on certain occasions, perform good works, even from a natural point of view? St. Thomas Aquinas explains: “even in the state of corrupted nature it [human nature] can, by virtue of its natural endowments, work some particular good, as to build dwellings, plant vineyards, and the like; yet it cannot do all the good natural to it, so as to fall



Saints in the beatific vision,
by Giusto de Menabuoi - Baptistery of
St. John the Baptist, Padua (Italy)

Without grace, it is impossible for us to do good integrally; if we are docile to its inspirations, we will be raised to unimaginable heights

short in nothing; just as a sick man can of himself make some movements, yet he cannot be perfectly moved with the movements of one in health, unless by the help of medicine he be cured.”⁷

How much less can man, by his natural powers, perform acts that surpass his corrupted nature, such as the practice of virtues and the observance of the Divine Commandments. We cannot, therefore, even pronounce the name of Jesus devoutly without the aid of an actual grace.⁸

The solution, therefore, seems to be summarized in the Ignatian adage: “Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you.”⁹

Allowing oneself to be guided by divine grace

If we know how to listen to God’s voice in the silence of our interior, we will realize how at every moment we are inspired, by actual graces, to a greater union with Him. St. Maravillas of Jesus used to repeat: “*Si tú le dejas... – If you let Him act...*” Let us be docile to the inspirations of grace, He will raise us to heights we never dared to imagine we could reach.

“I believe,” the Spanish Saint also said, “that our nothingness and our misery do not matter at all to the Lord; He takes care of fixing, cleaning, and changing; the point is that we love Him and make His divine will so much our own [...], that it alone may govern our lives, in great and small things, external and internal, and that we occupy ourselves only with fulfilling it and, above all, with letting it be fulfilled in us.”¹⁰ ✠

¹ ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX. Derniers entretiens, 5 juin. In: *Œuvres complètes*. Paris: Cerf; Desclée de Brouwer, 2006, p.1009.

² ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *Somos hijos de Dios. Misterio de la divina gracia*. Madrid: BAC, 1977, p.59.

³ Cf. ORDINARY OF THE MASS. Preface of the Saints. In: ROMAN MISSAL. Third Typical Edition, 2011, USCCB, p. 599

⁴ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.113, a.9.

⁵ MARTIN LUTHER. Carta a Melanchthon, 1/8/1521. In: *Obbras*. 4.ed. Salamanca: Sígueme, 2006, p.387.

⁶ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *De correptione et gratia*, c.II, n.3.

⁷ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., q.109, a.2.

⁸ Cf. ROYO MARÍN, op. cit., p.60-61.

⁹ CCC 2834.

¹⁰ ST. MARAVILLAS DE JESUS. Carta 6241, de 17/6/1950. In: *Cartas. Antología epistolar*. 2.ed. Madrid: Edibesa, 2007, p.282.



Do We Need to Ask for Graces?

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§2010 Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God’s wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions.

Paragraph 2010 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church highlights three relevant theological aspects regarding grace.

In the first place, it emphasizes the importance of ardently seeking it because, being a gift from God, it frees us from sin and strengthens us in the practice of virtues, so that we may attain eternal life.

In the second place, this paragraph points out that temporal goods – health, friendship, professional success, material comfort, and many others – “can be merited in accordance with God’s wisdom.” Someone will probably ask: how do we know the criterion of divine wisdom so that we may merit such goods? The answer is simple.

St. Ignatius of Loyola¹ teaches a rule of discernment called *to the degree that*, which exhorts us to use the things of this world to the degree that they help us to fulfil our ultimate end, that is, to love and serve God and, by this means, save our souls.

Therefore, to the degree that material goods prevent us from reaching this final goal, we should set them aside. In short, we are invited to ask for

graces to accept God’s wise and holy will, and thus achieve our purpose.

Finally, this paragraph teaches us that, regarding both spiritual and temporal goods, we should always ask for them through prayer. Comparing Himself to a vine, Our Lord declares: “He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

Therefore, as branches of this divine vine, we will only produce spiritual fruits and meritorious works by lovingly linking ourselves to Jesus. And this link is established through prayer, which obtains for us the graces to persevere in the practice of good.

Indeed, it is a truth of the Catholic Faith that we have an urgent need to pray. To such an extent that St. Alphonsus Liguori affirms that the undeserved grace of our eternal salvation depends on our prayers. Here is his famous maxim: “He who prays is certainly saved; he who does not pray is certainly condemned.”² And he adds: “All the blessed, except children, were saved by prayer. All the condemned were lost because they did not pray; if they had prayed, they would not have been lost.”³

With regard to this exalted perspective, let us invoke Mary Most Holy, whose power of intercession is infallible. Truly, there is no grace that She cannot obtain for us in a maternal and merciful way from her Divine Son Jesus. ✚

¹ Cf. ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA. *Spiritual exercises*, n.23.

² ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI. *Del gran mezzo della preghiera*. Parte prima, c.1.

³ Idem, *ibidem*.

Be they spiritual or temporal goods, we ought to request them through prayer

The Virgin and Child,
by Fra Angélico -
Fine Arts Museum, Boston (USA)



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In Exile... Prelude to Heavenly Communion!

When the word “mysticism” is heard, one immediately thinks of extraordinary phenomena such as ecstasies, levitations and stigmata... But what if every Christian were called to walk this path? Do we really know what mysticism is?



✦ Adriel Brandelero

Among the various titles that can be given to man, one is usually not very agreeable to him, although it is quite true: dethroned king. Indeed, his life in this vale of tears is not the one God originally planned for him in creating him: “let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Gn 1:26).

In our mind’s eye, we can contemplate Adam, for example, in perfect delight with the climate of Paradise, making a tree bend at his command to gather a piece of fruit, and then ordering a bird to carry it as a gift to Eve. However, he lost all of this and much more as a result of sin... “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Gn 3:17-19).

It is terrible to imagine the first shocks of the poor couple when faced with the harshness of our world, the rough stones and thorns of our soil, and the fearsome roaring of the beasts... Perhaps on that first night of exile Adam remembered, wistfully, the wonders of Eden. And while tears streamed down his face, God spoke to him in the depths of his soul... as He used to converse with him in the afternoon

Every baptized person is called to live on this Earth in relationship with God, and theology calls this the mystical life of the Christian

breeze in the gardens of Paradise! Yes, this he had not lost: the Creator still visited him in intimate conversations. The man was indeed a dethroned king, but no less loved!

What is mysticism?

To varying degrees and in different ways, every baptized person is given the opportunity to live on this earth in relationship with God, and this is what theology calls the *mystical life of the Christian*.¹ This is what the Second Vatican Council teaches us: “all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”² And the *Catechism* concludes, succinctly: “All are called to holiness: ‘Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mt 5:48).”³

Now, Catholic doctrine affirms that the Christian’s purpose is to be configured with Our Lord, and the mystical life is the normal path to achieve this end: “Spiritual progress tends toward



ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called ‘mystical’ because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments – ‘the holy mysteries’ – and, in Him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate union with Him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.”⁴

Extraordinary signs, for some...

The statement from the *Catechism* quoted above may surprise some, but yes, every Christian is called to the mystical life! We only need to differentiate how it manifests itself.

Indeed, the title of *mystic* immediately suggests to our imagination someone in ecstasy, a seer, or even a stigmatized person. However, such manifestations should more precisely be called *extraordinary mystical phenomena*.⁵

Theology enumerates several of them, including those of a cognitive or affective nature, such as visions, locutions, discernment of spirits, and burnings of love, and those of a bodily nature, such as stigmata, tears and sweat of blood, prolonged fasts, sleep deprivation, bilocation, levitation, and supernatural aromas, among many others.⁶

It is clear that the Church will always be very cautious in differentiating extraordinary mystical phenomena from any other situation of a pathological or preternatural kind. However, scientific data speaks frankly in favour of the real existence of such phenomena, against the convictions of the sceptics...

If we take, for example, a mystical saint who had the gift of inedia, that is, prolonged fasting, and compare them to someone

endowed with only natural human capacities, we will soon find evidence of supernatural support. Science admits that a man can survive several weeks without eating. In the middle of the last century, Lord MacSwiney decided to stop eating in protest against English domination in Ireland; his life lasted seventy-three days! This is the farthest limit to which the natural can reach. However, it is known that St. Catherine of Siena went eight years without eating; St. Nicholas of Flüe, twenty years; and St. Lidwina of Schiedam, twenty-eight years...⁷

God continues to converse with man living in the state of grace, no longer in the gardens of Eden, but within his own inner temple

The “better part,” which will not be taken from us

After stating these facts alone, it seems easy to conclude that such extraordinary phenomena are not characteristic of every Christian. However, it is essential to understand that the mystical life is not limited to these resounding manifestations, nor are they even the most sublime aspect of Catholic spirituality. As proof of this assertion, one can consider that an impious man like Caiaphas prophesied, through inspiration, the redemptive Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 11:49-52), and the treacherous Balaam was given the power to prophesy, through revelation, the providential mission of the Hebrew people and even the birth of the Messiah (cf. Num 23-24).

The baptized person who retains the state of grace has something far superior to any of these extraordinary phenomena: the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in their soul. God continues to converse with humankind, no longer in the Garden of Eden, but within their own inner temple.



João Paulo Rodrigues

Faithful in prayer in the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Piraquara (Brazil). On the previous page, St Teresa of Jesus, by Alonso del Arco - Lázaro Galdiano Museum, Madrid

THOSE WHO ASK, RECEIVE!

Whatever is a true positive good is of itself desirable and we may ask it of God. And if it is licit for us to ask for, to desire, and to put forth great efforts for the acquisition of health, knowledge, and sharpness of wit, so also it ought to be lawful [...] to seek, desire, and strive for so superior a good as the health, knowledge, and penetration which the divine Spirit communicates (cf. 1 Cor 14:1).

There is not the least presumption in this if it is desired with the right intention, just as there is no presumption in the desire to receive Communion in order to please God and to nourish and fortify our souls. Presumption lies in desiring these things from motives of vainglory, and not when they are sought as an aid for our weakness, to establish us in humility and all the other virtues, to make us grow in the grace and knowledge of God and in all things, according to Jesus Christ, until we arrive at the fullness of perfect and truly spiritual men.

We already know that no one can be such unless he is animated, directed, and governed by the divine Spirit and greatly enriched by His precious gifts. [...]

Although no one should attempt to place himself in that state to which he has not yet been called, much less attempt to fly without wings, yet all souls can and

should ask that the gates be opened to them and should beg for wings like the dove – which are the precious gifts of wisdom and understanding – so that they may fly and be at rest. They should be assured that they will be filled with holy desires and that “everyone that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened” (Mt 7:8).

By the very fact that this state is of such great worth and that we are unable to attain it by our own efforts, we should beg for it with great insistence, saying with the Samaritan woman, “Lord, give me to drink of this water.” [...] If it is not asked for ardently, that is only because it is not known or appreciated. “If thou didst know the gift of God... thou perhaps would have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water... springing up into life everlasting” (Jn 4:10-15). [...]

The divine Spouse is continually calling all souls and He is desirous of celebrating with them the banquet of the mystical nuptials (cf. Rv 3:20). If we do not cooperate with Him or if we make ourselves deaf to His invitations, the fault is ours. ✠

ARINTERO, OP, John G.

The Mystical Evolution. St. Louis - London: Herder, 1951, v.II, p.384-389

As seen in the preceding articles, sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and actual graces constitute the supernatural organism that leads the soul to Christian perfection. This path is nothing other than the mystical life to which every baptized person is called, since the normal development of sanctifying grace leads to union with Christ, that is, to mysticism.

Provided that man does not fall into sin, he continually has the Divine Guest in his “dwelling,” enjoys His intimate friendship, and receives from Him the most precious teachings, like St. Mary Magdalene in Bethany, about whom Jesus Himself pronounced the sentence: “Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her” (Lk 10:42).

The mystical life of the Christian, which is the presence of the Blessed

Trinity in his soul – with the gifts, the virtues, and the graces that accompany it – is in reality the “better part” that will not be taken from the baptized person. This is the inner paradise where he will always encounter God, until the day when, having been faithful to this gift, he will be received into heavenly Paradise and the Lord Himself will be his exceedingly great reward (cf. Gn 15:1) for all eternity! ✠

¹ Cf. AGAESSE, Paul; SALES, Michel. *Mystique*. La vie mystique chrétienne. In: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1980, v.X, col.1939-1951.

² SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Lumen gentium*, n.40.

³ CCC 2013.

⁴ CCC 2014.

⁵ Cf. TANQUEREY, Adolphe. *Précis de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique*. 6.ed. Paris-Tournai-Roma: Société de S. Jean

L'Évangéliste; Desclée, 1928, p.932-967.

⁶ Cf. THURSTON, SJ, Herbert. *Los fenómenos físicos de misticismo*. San Sebastián: Dinor, 1953; BOUFLET, Joachim. *Encyclopédie des phénomènes extraordinaires dans la vie mys-*

tique. Paris: Les Jardins des Livres, 2002-2015, v.I-II.

⁷ Cf. ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *Teología de la perfección cristiana*. 11.ed. Madrid: BAC, 2006, p.845-846.



Does the Efficacy of Grace Constrain Free Will?

“*O*mnia est gratia” – Everything is grace in the supernatural realm. Man, left to his own devices, is incapable of taking a single step towards effective union with God. Without divine assistance, there is no conversion, spiritual progress, or holiness, and it is impossible to merit eternal life (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.109, a.5).

Faced with this truth, an inevitable question arises: how to reconcile the efficacy of divine grace with human freedom?

The difficulty is accentuated, to a great extent, by pride and liberalism, increasingly prevalent in our time. The world preaches absolute self-sufficiency, subjective happiness, moral relativism, and unlimited liberty as if they were supreme goods; conversely, it considers all external help, correction, or suggestion an evil, especially when inspired by Catholic doctrine and the eternal Law.

Thomistic theology, however, rejects such notions. For the Angelic Doctor, free will is a precious gift, ordained by God for good and capable of being guided by others for the acquisition or improvement of virtue and the rejection of sin (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.1, a.1; II-II, q.33, a.1). Thus, not all influence combats free will, except if it results from coercion. In this case, the act

would not proceed from a voluntary movement, but from an external imposition: “Coercion is nothing other than the imposition of a certain violence” (*De veritate*, q.22, a.5). God, however, acts within souls without coercion. Through grace He inspires, assists, and strengthens them in virtue.

Does His omnipotence compromise free will? No! When God moves the human will, He causes one inclination to succeed another, in such a way as to remove the first and preserve the second. Thus, the direction in which He leads the will does not contradict the new inclination of the soul. There

is, therefore, no violence or repression (cf. *De veritate*, q.22, a.8).

Let us take, with Aquinas, the example of a stone. By natural gravity, it is inclined downwards. Maintaining this inclination, if it is thrown upwards it will suffer violence. However, if God removes the inclination of gravity from the stone and imparts to it that of lightness, then the upward movement will no longer be coercive. In the same way, He acts on the human will effectively, but without constraining it, according to the wise and loving designs of His Providence (cf. *De veritate*, q.22, a.8).

Consequently, the soul justified by grace is more inclined towards the heavenly heights, without suffering aggression. God does not suppress or diminish our freedom. On the contrary! Although free will consists of our capacity to choose, when we opt for truth, goodness, and beauty, we conquer true freedom, the “glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). To choose error, evil, and ugliness is to succumb to the slavery of the sons of Satan.

Thus Msgr. João taught us:

“Choosing good is the ultimate freedom!”¹ ✠

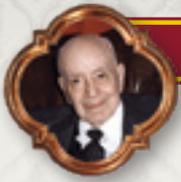


Francisco Leazaros

God acts within souls without coercion. Through grace He inspires, assists, and strengthens them in virtue, drawing towards heavenly heights.

“The calling of St. James the Apostle” - Museum of León (Spain)

¹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Homily*. São Paulo, 31/12/2007.



Our Lady in the Fight of the Revolution and Counter-Revolution

The Revolution is driven above all by two vices: pride and impurity. To crush it, it is necessary to practice the opposite virtues, which can only be achieved through grace, granted by God at the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

✠ Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

We should consider some questions about the relationship between the work of St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort and everything I explain in my book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* – hereafter, *RCR*.

The first of these is the role of Our Lady in the Counter-Revolution and, more especially, that of slavery to the Mother of God, that is, the perfect devotion preached by St. Louis.

Gnostic and revolutionary conception of the universe

RCR presents the Revolution as a movement born of moral deterioration. There are two fundamental vices, pride and impurity, which constitute in man an incompatibility with Catholic doctrine, from the following point of view.

The Church as it is, the doctrine it teaches, the universe that God created, and which we can know better from the standpoint of the Mystical Bride of Christ, are subjects that the virtuous, pure and humble man longs for. He has awe and joy to see that this is so, and accepts everything with a good heart.

But if a person gives in to the vice of pride, an incompatibility with various aspects of God's work begins to form within them. It is an irreconcilability, with the hierarchical character of the

Church, initially, then with that of civil society; or *vice versa*.

Next comes an inconformity with the hierarchical character of the family. Thus, egalitarianism develops, until it reaches the vertex of communism. That is to say, from pride raises a whole metaphysics contrary to Catholic doctrine, stemming from a vitiated incompatibility of the soul with the divine work.

Something more or less parallel could be said of impurity. The impure man has the necessary elements to object to the order established by God. He is generally led to liberalism. The existence of a rule, a restraint, a law that circumscribes the surge of his senses irritates him. With this, everything that signifies asceticism begins

From impurity and pride, moral causes of the Revolution, the elements for a vision diametrically opposed to God are formed

to seem aversive to him. Naturally, an objection arises against the very principle of authority as such.

The result is that, from impurity and pride, the essential factors for a vision diametrically opposed to the work of God are formed. This vision no longer differs in one point or another from the doctrine of the Church, but, as these vices deepen and, over the generations, become more pronounced, an entire conception is structured that is not only different, but as contrary as possible. And it ends up being, ultimately, the gnostic and revolutionary conception of the universe.

The Revolution has pride and sensuality as its moral cause. Thus, the whole problem of the Revolution and the Counter-Revolution, at its core, is a moral question.

What is affirmed in the lines or between the lines of the *RCR* is that, if it were not for pride and sensuality, the Revolution as an organized movement throughout the world would not exist, it would not be possible.

All moral preservation or regeneration stems from grace

Now, if at the heart of the problem of Revolution and Counter-Revolution we have a moral and therefore religious question – because all moral

questions are substantially religious, since a morality without religion is the most inconsistent thing imaginable – it follows that the struggle of Revolution and Counter-Revolution is, at its core, a religious struggle.

Thus, as we find ourselves on the terrain of religious struggle, we will better understand the role of Our Lady in the Counter-Revolution.

If a moral crisis gives rise to the spirit of Revolution, then it is true that this crisis can only be remedied with the help of grace.

The Church teaches us that men cannot stably and steadfastly fulfil the Commandments of God's Law, in their entirety, with merely natural resources; for this, they need grace.

On the other hand, when someone falls into a state of sin and the craving for evil increases in him, this moral situation, *a fortiori*, cannot be resolved without supernatural aid. The result is that all true moral preservation or regeneration stems from divine grace.

Condition for the triumph of the Counter-Revolution

We can easily see, then, the role of Our Lady. Since She is the channel through which all graces from God flow, we understand that the help of her prayers is indispensable for the Revolution to be defeated and the Reign of Mary to be established.

Graces can thus be obtained, but if men are not faithful to them, it becomes inevitable that the Revolution will triumph. Therefore, this influx of graces upon faithful souls is a fundamental element for the Revolution to be defeated. It depends on God, evidently, but He wished, by a free act of His will, to make it depend on the Blessed Virgin, for her glory and that of her Divine Son. From this it follows that devotion to Our Lady is the condition for the Revolution to be crushed and the Counter-Revolution to triumph.

I insist on this aspect because it is very important: if we take a

humanity which is faithful to the graces it receives through the Blessed Virgin Mary for the practice of the

Commandments, and this practice becomes a generalized phenomenon, it is inevitable that society will end up being well structured, because with the state of grace comes wisdom, and with wisdom all things fall into place.

It is not necessary to do extensive studies in Sociology, Economics, and Finance to achieve this. With the state of grace – not only through the natural, spontaneous, intrinsic movement of each man – everything tends to regulate itself, and the necessary studies will be done excellently and will achieve their desired result.

When grace is rejected, nothing progresses. And if something does go forward, it is worse than if it did not. We see an example of this in contemporary civilization: it was built upon the rejection of grace and achieved some resounding results; however, although this state of affairs seems to be an affirmation of humanity, in reality it devours it. The countries of great achievements are the countries of psychoses. That is to say, without grace, humanity either builds nothing, or constructs a prison, a torture chamber, a palace of delights in which it suffers more than in a concentration camp.

Intensity of graces proportional to the devotion to Our Lady

That being said, we can say that the greater the devotion to Our Lady, the more open the channel of graces will be. If it is an entirely authentic devotion, it is infallible that prayer will be answered and graces will be showered down upon a particular individual or country.

However, if devotion to the Blessed Virgin has restrictions or is defective, then grace also encounters, implicitly, a certain resistance from man. In this very fact, he already shows himself to be ungrateful, and it ends up happening that all the life, the sap of society, languishes.



Francisco Lecaros

Our Lady of Graces - St. Anthony Church, Cádiz (Spain)

The influx of graces on souls is the fundamental element for the Revolution to be vanquished, and the channel of these graces is Our Lady

It is often said that, in the economy of grace, Jesus Christ is the Head of the Mystical Body, and Our Lady the neck, because everything passes through her. The image is entirely true in the spiritual life of a person.

Imagine someone with little devotion to the Mother of God: he resembles an individual with a rope tied around his neck, which allows him only a tiny air stream. When he has no devotion, he suffocates. If, on the contrary, he has a great devotion to the Virgin Mary, his neck is entirely free, air enters his lungs in full draughts, and the man can live normally.

I am not saying that it is automatic, but that, if there is a correspondence to grace, everything necessarily becomes well-structured. It is not enough to work, to study and to organize. The fundamental problem is this correspondence.

In the opposite sense, we could say the same about the devil, because his

role in the outbreak and progress of the Revolution was enormous. He managed to tempt man, inducing him to a revolutionary position and to revolutionary extremes, which are even beneath human misery, and to make a Revolution like the current one, which is worse than the present degree of the decadence of human nature. The process would not have been as terrible as

The determining factors of the Revolution and the Counter-Revolution, which are grace and the devil, depend on the reign and dominion of Mary

it is if the devil were not there tempting man.

Now, this formidable driving factor of the Revolution is entirely dependent on Our Lady. It is enough for her to take the slightest stance of authority for all of hell to tremble, to become confounded, to withdraw and disappear. On the contrary, it is enough for her to see fit that, for the punishment of men, it is appropriate to allow the devil a certain range of action, for him to go as far as She allows.

So, the determining factors of the Counter-Revolution and the Revolution, which are grace and the devil, depend on the reign and dominion of the Blessed Virgin. We see, therefore, once more, her role in this struggle.

True Queen of the universe...

It must be added that the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary should not be considered solely from the point of view of prayer. She is not only the One who prays for all men, but the Queen of the universe, and this royalty is real.

Someone might object: "Dr. Plinio, calling Our Lady Queen is nonsense, because She does everything God wants, She is His servant. Therefore, ultimately, the Blessed Virgin is not Queen, but simply like a transparent and inert glass through which divine rays pass. The true King is God."

There is a fine point here that needs to be considered. Imagine a school principal who has extremely insubordinate students; he punishes them and imposes an iron dictatorship. Then he steps aside and says to his mother the following:

"I know that you will govern this school in a different way than I did, because I govern with an iron rod and you have a motherly heart. I want you to govern now, not me. I hand the direction over to you."

This lady would run the school as the principal wished, but using her

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Dr. Plinio in 1994



Coronation of the Blessed Virgin, by Jacopo di Cione - National Art Gallery, London

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own method, which would represent her will as distinct from his, but by which she would, at the same time, do the principal's will entirely.

This is how Our Lady is Queen of the universe. Jesus Christ gave her, who is solely Mother and has no role as judge, a royalty whose mercy goes beyond the justice that He, in His position as Judge, wishes to exercise.

So Our Lord places her, with all the indulgence, all the extreme mercy of the Mother – unfitting to paternal authority alone – as Queen of the universe, in order to govern it. And the Son's will is for His Mother to do something that He could not accomplish.

It is, therefore, as distinct from Our Lord that Mary, Queen of the universe, best fulfils His will.

...who guides events and directs History

So, there is a truly Marian regime of governance of the universe, which explains the role of Our Lady as the one who directs, regulates the course

*Besides omnipotent
and supplicant
mediatrix,
She is truly
the Queen who
directs the unfolding
of History*

of earthly events and decrees what should happen. Always, of course, inspired by God and in union with Him.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is infinitely inferior to the Almighty, that is evident, but He freely chose to give her this role by an act of liberality. The duration of the Revolution and the Counter-Revolution depends on her, and it is She who intervenes in events so that the Revolution does not prevail. Suffice it to recall the Battle of Lepanto, for example.

How many other events in the History of the Church have there been in which the Blessed Virgin made it clear that it was her direct intervention that influenced happenings! And then it is understood that, more than an omnipotent and interceding mediator, She is truly the Queen who guides events and directs History.

When the Church sings about the Mother of God, "You alone exterminated all heresies in the entire universe," it affirms that her role in this extermination was, as it were, unique. The one who promotes the elimination of heresies directs the triumphs of orthodoxy; whoever governs both directs History. She is truly the Queen. And this royalty of Our Lady gives us a further insight into her role in the entire conflict of the Revolution and the Counter-Revolution. ✦

Taken, with adaptations, from:
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St. John Ogilvie

Martyr of the Faith, of the Papacy and of Priestly Celibacy

When in danger, a bold eagle; in his ministry, a zealous shepherd; in court, a prudent serpent; in torments, a serene lamb; at the scaffold, an indomitable lion!



✦ Gabriel Marques

Fr Lawrence Lew, OP (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

In 1580, Scotland found itself at a crossroads: its Catholic history, personified in the controversial figure of a queen imprisoned for her faith, Mary Stuart, confronted a turbulent present, agitated by the waves of John Knox's political and religious revolution. What would the future hold?

This dilemma was well symbolized in the home of the Baron of Drum-na-Keith. The mother, a Catholic of noble

lineage. The father, head of the lesser branch of the Ogilvie family, and one of the Calvinists responsible for investigating and arresting Jesuits. What would become of little John, the couple's newborn son?

A young man in search of the truth

Since 1560, John Knox's Calvinist Presbyterianism had been established,

at the cost of bloodshed, as the official religion of the country, denying the Holy Eucharist, the Liturgy, the Papacy, and the episcopate. On August 24th, Parliament prohibited the celebration of Holy Mass throughout Scottish territory. Offenders would be subject to confiscation of property, exile, corporal punishment at the discretion of magistrates, and even capital punishment. Knox himself confessed that "a Mass was more fearsome to him than if ten thousand armed enemies landed anywhere in the kingdom."¹

It was from this Scotland that, a few decades later, young Ogilvie would leave to study in France at the age of thirteen.

The boy, who had received a Calvinist education at home, began to take a keen interest in the religious controversies that were then raging throughout Europe. Guided by sincere goodwill, he soon received the help of the Holy Spirit, who opened his understanding to the meaning of the Holy Scriptures and inspired in him a deep admiration for the stories of the martyrs. Thus, John soon perceived that the Catholic Church was the true Church of Christ.

At the age of seventeen, he entered the Scottish College of Louvain, run by



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Calvinist Presbyterianism had established itself, by dint of bloodshed, as the official religion of Scotland, banning Catholic worship from its territory.

The preaching of John Knox, by David Wilkie - National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh; at top of page, St. John Ogilvie - Church of St Aloysius, Glasgow (Scotland)

Catholic priests. However, it was only with the Jesuit teachers at Olmütz, Austria, that he found his vocation.

A fervent Jesuit

An enthusiast of the pugnacious Ignatian charism, Ogilvie submitted his request to join the Order in his first year of studies at the institution. However, an epidemic forced the closure of the college.

Undeterred, the persistent Scotsman accompanied the superior to Vienna, where he was granted entry into the novitiate in Brno.

Ordained a priest in 1610, he came into contact with two other Jesuits who had returned from unsuccessful missions in Great Britain. One of them, Fr. Gordon, had spent three years imprisoned in the dreaded Tower of London! Enthralled by the daring undertaking and feeling an ardent desire to dedicate himself to the dangerous apostolate in his homeland, Scotland, the newly ordained priest expressed his aspirations to the Superior General.

Fr. Aquaviva, however, following the Ignatian school, severely reprimanded him for wanting to impose his will over that of his superiors. At that point, God was not asking of him the sacrifice of risking his life, but only that of religious obedience... At that point.

“Pleased to meet you, John Watson”

Indeed, two and a half years later, the superiors determined that Father Ogilvie should leave for Scotland. Due to the anti-Catholic laws then in force in those lands, he had to disguise himself as a former soldier and horse trader.

Thus, Captain John Watson – that was his pseudonym – disembarked at the small port of Leith, near Edinburgh, in the autumn of 1613. His objective was clear: to develop an

apostolate among the Catholic nobility and bourgeoisie, with a view to restoring Catholicism in Scotland.

Everything had to be done with discretion, efficiency, and sagacity, so as not to be denounced to the government.

Despite his good intentions, the first period of his apostolate was fruitless, as the complacent nobility showed no interest whatsoever in the Catholic cause.

In February 1614, the Jesuit presented – unsuccessfully – a proposal for a political-religious truce at the court in London.

At Easter he travelled to Paris, where he was reprimanded by his provincial, Father Gordon, for having left Scotland without the approval of his superiors.

Back in Scotland

A lover of obedience, the young priest did not become discouraged, but, on the contrary, returned – with even greater enthusiasm – to his mission. Perhaps due to this good disposition, it pleased Our Lady that this time his

clandestine apostolate would be more fruitful.

From Edinburgh to Glasgow, with the continual risk of falling prey to a snare, that mysterious Captain Watson would slip furtively through the prisons to encourage incarcerated Catholics to persevere in the Faith, preaching and administering the Sacraments in secret, in the homes of Catholic families.

In the brief period between Easter 1614 and the beginning of 1615, numerous souls were reconciled with the Holy Church thanks to the zeal of the courageous missionary.

And surely many more conversions would have occurred if Father Ogilvie’s work in those lands had not been brutally interrupted.

The betrayal

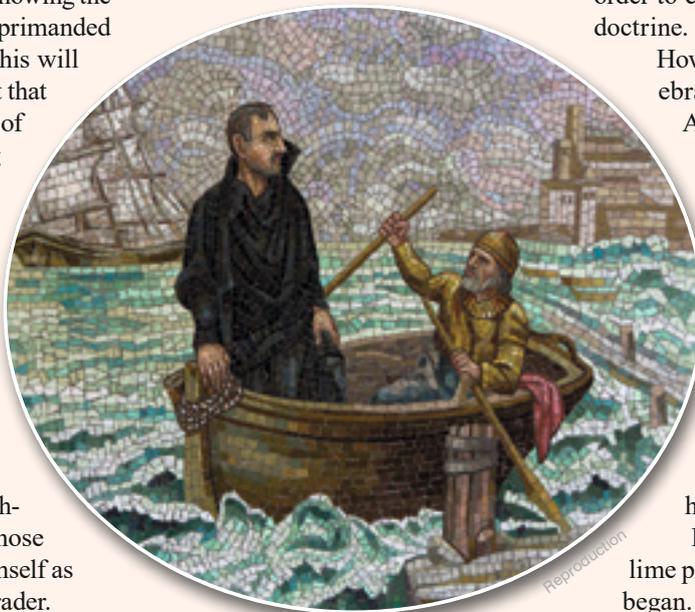
After celebrating Mass in the presence of Adam Boyd, a Protestant who had declared himself willing to return to the true Church, “Captain Watson” arranged a meeting with the supposed convert in the Glasgow marketplace in order to enlighten him about Catholic doctrine.

However, directly after the celebration, Boyd went to see the Anglican “archbishop” Spottiswood, a former Presbyterian minister responsible for keeping Catholics and Calvinists in Glasgow under the control of the royal power. Thus, when Fr. Ogilvie arrived at the agreed location, he was arrested and taken to the mayor’s house. Spottiswood also went there with his henchmen.

From then on, the most sublime pages of the Saint’s biography began.

Resembling Our Lord in the Passion

In a grim re-enactment of the encounter between Our Lord Jesus



In perfect disguise, that priest disembarked in Leith; everything had to be done with discretion, efficiency, and shrewdness.

St. John Ogilvie returns to Scotland - Church of St Aloysius, Glasgow (Scotland)



Christ and Annas, the pseudo-archbishop slapped the sacred minister, censuring him for “the audacity of celebrating Mass in a city of the Reformed Church.”²² To which, intrepidly, the Jesuit retorted: “And Your Grace has the audacity to behave like an executioner and not like an archbishop.”

Upon hearing the fearless reply, Spottiswood’s lackies threw themselves with infernal fury upon the young priest, tearing out his beard and wounding him with their nails. Only the intervention of a civil authority was able to contain the furious wrath of those henchmen.

In a further resemblance to Our Lord in his Passion, Fr. Ogilvie was subjected to the humiliation of being stripped of his garments before being imprisoned.

Sagaciousness, intrepidity and steadfastness

The following morning, the interrogation began, in the presence of the prelate and the judge of Glasgow. From the very beginning, the Saint was questioned about the main accusation: “Have you celebrated Mass in the Kingdom?” Knowing the penal code, the priest limited himself to answering: “Since it is a crime, it is not for me to answer, but for the witnesses.” Asked if he recognized the kingship of the Calvinist James VI, he answered with precision: “James is, in fact, King of Scotland,” without expounding on the legitimacy of his power. At other times, he simply refused to answer more compromising questions.

However, prudence did not cloud his valour. On one occasion, he rebuked Spottiswood for the invalidity of his episcopal consecration: “You are a layman, and you have no more spiritual jurisdiction than your crozier!”

At the end of the twenty-six hours that constituted the first

session of the interrogation, the defendant was trembling with fever, as he had not eaten anything. Having been allowed to approach a fireplace to regain his strength, a servant of the Anglican leader approached him and threatened to throw him into the fire then and there. “You have chosen the best moment to do so, for I am trembling with cold,” retorted the Saint wittily and with superiority, revealing an unperturbed detachment, the fruit of absolute trust in God.

Despite the numerous accusations, the magistrates’ greatest interest was, in reality, to discover the names of those who desired the return of Catholicism to Great Britain. Thus, as they failed to obtain any denunciation from Fr. Ogilvie, the executioners decided to deprive him of sleep in the hope that his resistance would diminish and – even involuntarily – he would end up denouncing one of his friends.

For eight consecutive days and nine nights, he was subjected to constant

torture: he was exposed to deafening noises, violently dragged across the floor, his hair was torn out, and he was wounded with sharp stakes. Furthermore, he was tied to iron beams, which prevented him from standing upright or lying down.

In addition to the physical punishments, Spottiswood also inflicted a grievous moral torment on him, spreading the rumour that the Jesuit had betrayed the Catholic cause by revealing the names of some of the faithful.

As the doctors warned that the defendant could not endure such brutal agony for another three hours, they allowed him to rest for twenty-four hours. After that, the sessions multiplied without a verdict being declared, and – above all – without Fr. Ogilvie revealing any information.

Condemned to death

Finally, the King himself sent him a questionnaire about the relations between the Church and the State. Although he was aware of the consequences, Fr. John Ogilvie could not, however, deny his faith. He answered the sovereign’s delicate questions according to Catholic doctrine, which was equivalent to signing his own death sentence.

A final tribunal was established to judge Fr. Ogilvie for his answers to the royal questionnaire. The young priest could not and did not wish to exonerate himself from this accusation: if necessary, he would give his life in defence of the true Church and its divine rights.

The sentence was pronounced. John Ogilvie would go to the scaffold. With cynical subtlety, the tribunal took meticulous care to issue a verdict that did not appear to be based on religious convictions, but only on civil crimes: high treason and violation of the laws of the State. As usual, the wicked wished to conceal the true



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For eight consecutive days and nine nights, he was subjected to constant torture, but nothing could shake his resolve

St. John Ogilvie in prison - Church of St Aloysius, Glasgow (Scotland)

reasons for the condemnation in order to tarnish the glory of the faithful martyr with the mud of vulgarity.

But a man of Fr. Ogilvie's moral stature could not die as a mere forger of documents...

Until martyrdom, doing damage to the wicked

By this time, the "Ogilvie affair" had already become known throughout Scotland. Realizing that the apostasy of the famous Jesuit would be more valuable to the Protestant cause than his heroic martyrdom, the enemies of the Church swooped down, like vultures, upon the condemned man in an attempt to win him over.

March 10, 1615. While the convict is on the way to the scaffold a Protestant minister, by the name of Scott, simulating affection and compassion, tries to convince him to renounce the Catholic Faith and embrace heresy.

In a last display of astuteness, the Jesuit pretends to be pleased with the proposal and, feigning fear of death, replies hesitantly: "If it depended on me to die or not... but I can do nothing. I have been declared guilty of high treason, and therefore I will die."³

Without realizing the holy ruse, the heretic replies: "Treason! Not at all! Abjure Papism and everything will be forgiven you; you will even be showered with favours." And he reveals that he was sent by Spottiswood with orders to offer him the hand of the schismatic prelate's daughter, along with a significant sum, if he would agree to become a Protestant.

At this point, both arrive at the scaffold. The Saint invites the messenger to repeat the proposal before the numerous witnesses. Upon hearing it, the Protestants exult, while the Catholics who are there to witness the martyrdom tremble in anguish at the prospect of such a scandalous apostasy.



"For my religion I would give a hundred lives, if I had them. I only have one, take it, for you will never take my religion from me"

Execution of St. John Ogilvie -
Church of St Aloysius, Glasgow (Scotland)

Fr. Ogilvie then asks, as if apprehensive: "And in this case, can I not fear being persecuted as being guilty of high treason?"

"No!", the crowd shouts. "My crime, therefore, is only my religion?" Judging that they were about to obtain the capitulation of the missionary, the mob led by Scott shouted: "Religion alone, and only religion!"

Fr. Ogilvie had achieved what he longed for. In a typically counter-revolutionary manoeuvre, he thus unmasked the real motive of the execution before History, and with it, the bloodthirsty malice of the agents of the pseudo-reform.

With dignity and contentment, the martyr proclaims: "Very well! This is more than I desired. I am condemned to death solely for my religion. For it I would give a hundred lives, if I had them. I only have one, take it, for you will never take my religion from me."

Enraged at seeing himself so cleverly deceived, the Protestant minister ordered the executioner to carry out

the sentence immediately. The latter tearfully begged the condemned man to pardon him for shedding his innocent blood.

In a final gesture of generosity, the missionary embraced the executioner and cast his belongings to the people. The priest's rosary fell on the chest of a Calvinist youth. Years later, that young man would attribute his conversion to Catholicism to this episode.

Finally, the priest was hanged. Scotland lost a missionary, and Heaven received a hero!

"Non praevalerunt!"

John Ogilvie was beatified on November 22, 1929, by Pius XI, and canonized on October 17, 1976, by Paul VI. He is commemorated in the Liturgy on March 10.

His death is undoubtedly one of the most compelling of the martyrdoms that took place in

Great Britain between the 16th and 17th centuries. However, it is not the only one. Little is said about the horrific tortures to which many Catholics were subjected in the United Kingdom, starting with the schism of Henry VIII.

However, with each persecution it faces, the Holy Church will always engender new heights of sublimity and holiness, proudly proclaiming its immortality: "*Non praevalerunt!*" ✠

¹ IRIBARREN, Jesús. San Juan de Ogilvie. In: ECHEVERRÍA, Lamberto de; LLORCA, SJ, Bernardino; REPETTO BETES, José Luis (Org.). *Año Cristiano*. Madrid: BAC, 2003, v.III, p.199.

² BUTLER, Alban. *Vidas de los Santos*. Ciudad de México: Clute, 1965, v.I, p.522.

³ The following dialogue is taken from the work: MOLINARI, SJ, Paulo (Ed.). *Santos e Beatos da Companhia de Jesus*. Suplemento. Braga: Secretariado Nacional do Apostolado da Oração; Apostolado da Imprensa, 1974, p.215-217.



A Quick Solution for a Complex Problem

A serious traffic accident left two patients waiting hours for a bone marrow transplant. Against all expectations, Dona Lucilia's intervention obtained from God what seemed impossible.

✦ **Elizabete Fátima Astorino**

There are certain “coincidences” that science cannot explain; miracles and supernatural interventions are beyond its scope. And in some cases, the divine manifestations and unexpected aid received are difficult for even people of great faith to comprehend.

One such case is reported by Dr. Gianne Donato Costa Veloso, a haematologist at the Pope St. John Paul II Transplant Service of the Holy House of Mercy in the Brazilian city of Montes Claros.

She tells us of a series of events involving two delicate bone marrow transplants which would have ended in disaster if it were not for the intervention of Dona Lucilia, obtaining from God a whole sequence of highly improbable occurrences.

A delicate procedure

Dr. Gianne writes:

“For some years I have been working with diseases that affect the blood system, and for me this is a sublime art, in which every detail makes the difference between life or death, the end or a new beginning.

“In some situations, to treat specific types of haematological cancers, high-dose chemotherapy is necessary,

which destroys the disease, but also does away with all the cells responsible for the production of blood and the body's defence system. This eliminates the disease, but it can also kill the patient.

“The only viable way to perform this efficacious treatment for the disease is to separate the cells capable of rebuilding the blood and defence system, storing them and maintaining them fully alive outside the patients while the chemotherapy destroys the disease. Once patients become disease-free and lacking bone marrow, the preserved cells are infused back into their bodies to reconstitute the destroyed blood system. This is the essence of bone marrow transplant.”

The steps of a complex procedure

Dr. Gianne provides further clinical explanations to help us understand how the facts unfolded:

“To perform a bone marrow transplant, doctors must reach the correct diagnosis and determine the procedure's suitability for the patient. Preparations involve administering medication to mobilize stem cells from the organized bone marrow environment into the vascular system that circulates blood through our vessels to

our entire body. Then, using a catheter in a large vein, the doctor collects the desired cells, passing them through a machine that identifies them by their size and the absence or presence of granules within them.

“These selected cells are stored in plastic bags for future evaluation regarding quantity and vitality, to reach a conclusion as to their suitability to act as very special seeds with a specific destination — to settle, repopulate and restore proper functioning to the entire bone marrow, beginning from a single type of infused mother cell capable of generating thousands of daughter cells, with varied functions. These new cells offer the body a fresh start without disease and boost the immune system, fully restoring it and making it newly competent.

“The harvested cells are frozen in an appropriate solution and stored in this state, which is something akin to hibernation, potentially for years. What guarantees the survival of these cells is freezing them in this specific solution, which slows, and later halts the metabolic activity of the cells. Stored in this way, the cells cease to consume oxygen and energy, and remain alive during the whole period in which they are apart from the patient's body.

“Similarly, the cell’s reawakening to fully resume activity is triggered by thawing and rapid infusion into the body, through a major vein. This very process soon furnishes new sources of oxygen and energy to aid at such a critical moment. The cells, now awakened from hibernation and nourished by the patient’s bloodstream, begin to circulate throughout the blood and, by a beautiful mechanism of recognition of their new home, begin to repopulate the bone marrow environment that had been prepared to receive them.

“This preparation involves destroying the patient’s entire blood system and immune system through high-dose chemotherapy, so that all malignant cells are eliminated. It is a treatment that would be impossible to tolerate if the cells capable of rebuilding these systems were not reserved in safekeeping outside the body. If the stem cells are not reinfused, various complications will arise that will almost invariably lead to the sick person’s death.”

A traffic accident leads to crisis

Given this explanation of the treatment’s complexity and the need to follow the exact sequence pre-established by the medical team, Dr. Gianne now describes the unusual situation she experienced:

“Two patients with multiple myeloma were prepared to receive their new bone marrow. After confirming the viability of the cells priorly harvested, chemotherapy treatments were performed twenty-four hours before the scheduled time for the infusion of the stem cells. It happens that that these cells are manipulated at the Biological Tissue Centre, four hundred kilometres away from where the patients would receive them.

“The cells are transported in plastic bags, protected by thin metal plates and immersed in containers with liquid nitrogen, which maintains the temperature at 195 °C. The position and inclination of the container, inside the vehicle that transports this sensitive material, are monitored to ensure that there will be no loss of energy or increase in temperature during the journey to the medical centre in Montes Claros where the transplants are performed.

“At the time the cells were supposed to arrive – six o’clock in the evening, one day previous to their infusion – we were informed of a transport delay, with a new estimated arrival time of nine o’clock. At nine o’clock, the nurse at the transplant centre received word from the transport company that the driver of the car had been in an accident: the vehicle had overturned and was suspended on a slope next to the Jequitinhonha River, near the municipality of Olhos D’água.

The driver was rescued by SAMU (Mobile Emergency Care Service), but

no one knew the location or condition of the plates containing the stem cells to be used for the two patients’ transplant procedure.

“I immediately requested the assistance of the doctor responsible for the Transplant Unit, my husband, Dr. Luiz Fernando Veloso, who contacted the hospital superintendent. Together they got in touch with the SAMU to obtain detailed information about the accident, in order to mobilize police and rescue workers, so that they could provide the necessary manpower to locate the plates containing the cells, in time for their infusion.

“We soon learned that the car was badly damaged, suspended by a steel cable, and that the container was no longer inside. Furthermore, the container lid had been located, but the rest was missing – most importantly the precious plates containing the ‘lives’ of the two patients.”

Prayer: the solution to an “unsolvable” problem

Seeing all the natural possibilities and recourses fall through, Dr. Gianne did not hesitate for a single instant:



After the accident, the location and condition of the bags containing the stem cells were unknown. With each passing moment, the chances of them being suitable for transplantation diminished...

Vehicle transporting stem cells after the accident; highlighted, search for bags containing the material



“Faced with this occurrence, and in complete darkness and hopelessness, I was taken by an inspiration to offer prayer and supplication. I went to my oratory and prayed the mysteries of light – the luminous mysteries of the Holy Rosary – asking for Our Lady’s intercession, since that is what came to mind. It also occurred to me to ask a good lady I had heard about, with a reputation for holiness.

“This lady, now deceased, is invoked as “Dona Lucilia,” and as soon as her name came to mind, I began to pray and ask, amidst tears of despair, for her help in the search for the cells, so that they could be found suitable for infusion, in the right quantity and quality and in the quickest way possible, because time was a critical factor in that unusual and worrisome situation.

“The cells were among the trees and bushes, or at the bottom of the river – somewhere near the road leading to Olhos D’água. They were the ‘life’ of two hospitalized patients, whose bone marrow had been adequately destroyed by chemotherapy and was ready to receive the cells that had gone missing.

“For about four hours I prayed, cried, pleaded and asked God for the solution to this extremely serious and difficult problem. Each advance of the clock hand meant the heating of the cells, energy consumption and loss of vitality. If transport had been carried out at the normal time and the accident had occurred during the day, the impact of the temperature would certainly have been greater.”

Racing against the clock in the struggle to save two lives

“At 2:20 in the morning, we were informed that three of the four plates had just been found. The discovery of those small metal plates in a wooded area by the river, at night,



João S. Cria Dias

“I began to pray and ask, amid tears of despair, for Dona Lucilia’s help in finding the cells.”

Dona Lucilia at ninety-two years of age

and considering the searchers’ total lack of familiarity with the object being sought, was the first act of God’s providence.

“Immediately, the entire team responsible for the infusion went to the hospital, keenly anxious to determine the condition in which the bone marrows would arrive. Furthermore, I still didn’t know which of the two patients would receive one less plate.

“At 3:15 in the morning, the three plates were delivered to me in a cardboard box by an officer of the military police who had been cured of acute leukaemia about eighteen months earlier. I later learned that at some point during the search for the cells, it was suggested that they give up the search, but he and other good people who were there insisted on continuing the work, as they had an idea of the importance of that search to save the two lives awaiting rescue. I see this as a second act of God’s providence.

“The plastic bags were duly examined and sanitized; the contents of each

of the three were then infused: two bags holding a total of 3.6 million cells for one patient, and the other bag containing 5 million cells for the second patient. The bags arrived thawed, and at that point we did not know if the cells were still alive and able to perform their role, since the thawing process reactivates the cells, causing them to start consuming energy and oxygen and reducing their survival time outside the body.

“The infusion of the three bags containing the cells was carried out between 3:30 and 4:20 in the morning, without any complications and with excellent tolerance on the part of the patients. They were tranquil and still unaware of what had happened.”

A vital detail

One highly important detail, which Dr. Gianne makes a point of mentioning in her account, is the fact that, for the bone marrow to be properly reestablished in its function, the minimum number of cells that must be infused is two million. Aware of this, she had prayed that the right amount would be found. Her narration continues:

“The third intervention of God was that the two bags arrived for the patient who only had a total of 3.6 million cells stored. The loss of one of her bags would have been very serious. But the missing bag belonged to the patient who had, in the single bag found, more than double the minimum number of cells required.

“At five o’clock in the morning, I was given the fourth bag which, found late, was breached, torn, and with all its cellular content lost.

“At seven in the morning, this news was already on television, with images of a policeman rummaging through the undergrowth by the light of a flashlight in an incredible search for something of which he only had remote and second-hand knowledge. We informed the

patients about all that had happened and the implications and risks. They remained extraordinarily calm and confident.”

Sure of Dona Lucilia's intercession

“In ideal situations, signs of recovery of the transplanted bone marrow – whose minimum restoration we call ‘engraftment’ – are usually perceived between the tenth and fourteenth day after the infusion of stem cells. In some patients, this ‘engraftment’ can take thirty days or even longer to occur.

“This implies that, in that entirely abnormal situation, the ordeal of the wait could be extremely prolonged and stressful. The risk that the ‘engraftment,’ might fail, that is, that the marrow might simply not function, was preponderant. Success depended on how viable those cells were after the harm to which they were subjected as a result of the accident.

“The fifth day after the infusion was a Sunday. I went to Mass at Our Lady of the Clearest Mountains, a church of the Heralds of the Gospel. It was the first Sunday of June, the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In his homily, the Herald priest mentioned, among several examples of devotion to the Sacred Heart, Dona Lucilia, mother of Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, the same lady, famous for her sanctity, whom I had invoked on that difficult night. Simply hearing that was a type of relief for my anguish.

“At a certain point in his sermon, the priest made reference to Dona Lucilia as a ‘lamp’ that led to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! I was overcome with intense emotion as I remembered a series of

events: my prayers for the patients, the luminous mysteries, the flashlights of the police who found the altogether unfamiliar cell pouches in the dark... It was impossible not to associate the events of the bone marrow, my prayers, and the request for intercession that I made to that lady known for her holiness.

“I was overwhelmed with the certainty that this entire occurrence had been blessed, protected, guided, and illuminated by the intercession of Dona Lucilia.”

Finally, two patients completely cured

The hope Dr. Gianne had hinged on the help of such a kind mother would not be disappointed regarding the most important issue in play: the lives of the two patients. Let us follow this impressive story to its outcome.

“On the tenth day of the infusion, the patient who received both bags

of bone marrow showed unequivocal evidence of bone marrow ‘engraftment,’ and was discharged from the hospital four days later in excellent condition, as if the marrow had been unaffected by all the abuse it had suffered.

“On the eleventh day, the patient who had received only one bag showed signs of an inflammatory reaction which, although not frequent, can occur during bone marrow ‘engraftment.’ This manifested itself by fever, decreased arterial oxygen saturation, tachycardia, and malaise. She received appropriate treatment and twenty-four hours later was in good clinical condition.

“I want to clarify that the intensity of this reaction would have been much greater and graver if the patient had received both bags. God acted with utmost perfection, delivering a completely empty bag of bone marrow to me, because, otherwise, it would have been infused. This patient was released

from the hospital on the fifteenth day, also in excellent condition, as if nothing negative had acted on her bone marrow.

“On June 11th, the day one of the patients was discharged, we decided to thank Our Lady for the maternal care She had shown in relation to the search teams, the doctors and paramedics involved in these events. We received a visit from the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, with the blessing of Fr. Wagner Morato, EP. It was an important moment for the faith of many people there in the hospital.

“We took a beautiful photo for posterity, with everyone involved, and I made a point of holding a photo of Dona Lucilia, in gratitude for this great blessing that was granted to us.” ❖



Reproduction

Dr. Gianne's hope for help from such a kind mother would not be disappointed when it came to the most important issue: the lives of the two patients.

In the centre, Dr Gianne holding a picture of Dona Lucilia alongside two professionals involved in the case.

Photos: Joanna Chaves



Costa Rica – To the sound of hymns sung by the youth choir of the Heralds of the Gospel, on January 24 the historic cross erected at La Sabana Metropolitan Park in the city of San José was blessed by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Mark Gerard Miles, after months of restoration. The ceremony was attended by the Costa Rican President, Dr. Rodrigo Chaves Robles, and the First Lady, Signe Zeikate, who advocated the project to restore this religious and civic symbol of the country.

Photos: Antonio Queirós



Salvador (Brazil) – In a solemn session in the Cosme de Farias Plenary Hall, presided over by councilman Alexandre Aleluia on December 17, the City Council of Salvador conferred the title of Citizen of Salvador, “in memoriam,” to Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP, represented at the ceremony by Fr. Wagner Silva, EP.

Photos: Eric Salas



Spain – In an act of heartfelt filial devotion, on January 25, the members of the Heralds of the Gospel residing in Spain paid their homage the Patroness of their country with a Holy Mass and a floral offering held at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar in Zaragoza.



Photos: Romário Araújo

Structural City (Brazil) – On the occasion of the liturgical commemoration of St. Lucy, patroness of one of the chapels of the Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish, in Structural City, Cardinal Paulo Cezar Costa, Archbishop of Brasília, presided over the Solemn Eucharist of the community on December 13. Concelebrating the Holy Mass was the parish pastor, Fr. Lourenço Ferronato, EP, and Fr. Miguel Ángel Díaz Meléndez, from the Parish of Our Lady of the Encounter with God.



Photos: David Domingues

Caieiras (Brazil) – One hundred and forty-four confirmands from the Parish of Our Lady of Grace received the Sacrament of Confirmation from the hands of the Most Rev. Sérgio Aparecido Colombo, Bishop of Bragança Paulista. The ceremony took place on December 7, in the church of the motherhouse of the Feminine Society of Apostolic Life, Regina Virginum



Photos: Eduardo Injique

Gabriel Lopes

Caieiras (Brazil) – The academic year at the St. Thomas Aquinas Theological Institute and the Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophical Institute commenced on January 28 with an inaugural lecture given by the Most Rev. Benedito Beni dos Santos, Bishop Emeritus of Lorena, who then presided over Holy Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary.



Photos: Emilio Páez



Ecuador – The Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary visited the parishes of St. John Bosco (photos 1 and 2) and St. Teresa of Jesus (photo 3) in the city of Cuenca. In both parishes, there was a solemn crowning of the statue and several Eucharistic Celebrations embellished by the choir of the Heralds of the Gospel.

Photos: José Cali



Chile – A blessed “Afternoon with Mary” was held at the Heralds of the Gospel house in the capital city, Santiago, on December 13. The programme consisted of talks on the theme “The Virgin Mary and Advent,” followed by the celebration of a Holy Mass.

Camila Juárez



Guatemala – In December, the choir of the feminine sector of the Heralds of the Gospel gave a musical performance at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Guatemala City, where the institution’s house is located. The music was followed by the distribution of provisions to the families present.

Photos: facebook.com/parroquiaguadalupelavilla



A request of the Blessed Virgin

The ceremonies held on the first Saturdays of each month in the different places where the Heralds of the Gospel are active have been occasions for a copious outpouring of graces. These events aim to fulfil the request of Our Lady in Fatima, that on five consecutive first Saturdays the faithful confess, receive Communion, pray a Rosary and meditate for fifteen minutes on the mysteries of the Rosary, as an act of reparation to her Immaculate Heart.

The photos below highlight the ceremonies that took place at the Collegiate Church of St. Isidore in Madrid, Spain; at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, in Lisbon, ay the Church of Pópulo, in Braga, and in the Church of Our Lady of the Conception, in Porto, Portugal; at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, in Caieiras; at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Grace, in Belém do Pará; and at the houses of the Heralds in the cities of Campos dos Goytacazes and Maringá, Brazil (PR).



Madrid

Eric Salas



Lisbon

Francisco Mayer



Caieiras (Brazil)

Stephen Nami



Caieiras (Brazil)

Stephen Nami



Belém (Brazil)

Salvador Loureiro



Lisbon

Francisco Mayer



Campos dos Goytacazes (Brazil)

Lucas Caldas



Caieiras (Brazil)

Stephen Nami



Madrid

Eric Salas



Porto (Portugal)

António Carneiro



Braga (Portugal)

António Carneiro



Maringá (Brazil)

Fernanda Aguiar



The Victory of the Vanquished

For a time, France shook. Some peasants, armed with scythes and rosaries, dared to deter the Revolution.



✦ Pedro Gusson

As the year 1793 dawned, France seemed a nation doomed to disappearance. Everything that had been stable in thirteen centuries of Christian monarchy was disintegrating or being destroyed: the king had been beheaded; the royal family was imprisoned; the nobility had emigrated; the clergy was divided between the persecuted and the schismatics; the bourgeoisie was convulsed by revolutionary miasmas; Paris had become the centre of the revolt.

The solution would come from the only power capable of stirring providential forces in the humblest and most unsuspected recesses of society, at times when the elites decline. It was the same power that, centuries before, had made a shepherdess named Joan of Arc the saviour of the “firstborn daughter of the Church”.

As a certain author observes,¹ there are episodes in the annals of France that constitute echoes of Sacred History. And in this sense, it can be said that it was up to the Vendée counter-revolution to repeat the words of David when fighting the giant Goliath: “and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lords and He will give you into our hand” (1 Sam 17:47).

In the midst of the French Revolution, a great duel would begin between Christianity and the Revolution,² which would be the parable of the supreme battle between light and darkness.

The beginnings of a religious war

On August 24, 1790, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was sanctioned, the cornerstone of a modern, state-run “church”, separate from the Roman See. Months later, the clergy was summoned to sign it, under penalty of exile or, if they remained in the country, death. The protagonists of the Revolution dreamed that, with the shepherds wounded, the flock would scatter.

But this would not be the case in a region traversed less than a century earlier by St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, where the bonds between the Church and the faithful remained too strong to be dissolved by a mere republican mandate.

On January 21, 1793, Louis XVI was guillotined. This was not merely a regicide, but a true attack on the Catholic order of the *Ancien régime*. The news would fall like a thunderbolt on the population of western France.

Catholics arise

The Vendée is a large province situated between the Loire River and the Atlantic Ocean, framed in some places by dense forests, in others by swamps.

This region was the birthplace of men of determined will and great attachment to traditions, coupled with a deep faith and unwavering fidelity to the family.

For the Vendéans, the sadness over the execution of the sovereign would soon turn into hatred, as the Convention

– the revolutionary government of the time – determined the recruitment of three hundred thousand men to defend its borders. Thus, the Revolution no longer demanded only the resignation of the French in the face of its atrocities, but that they take an active part in its initiatives. Needless to say, those rough peasants would not submit so easily...

March 12, Saint-Florent-le-Vieil. Some peasants become agitated when refusing to enlist. The Blues – as the republicans were known – bring a cannon to persuade them, but the young men throw themselves into the fray and end up capturing the artillery piece. This marks the beginning of a conflict that will spread almost simultaneously across various regions, threatening the revolutionary power.

There will, it is true, be other counter-revolutionary uprisings, such as that of the *Chouannerie* in Brittany, the revolts in Lyon, Toulon, and Marseille, and some scattered skirmishes with monarchists. But the Vendée insurrection will be the only movement to constitute an actual military corps in opposition to the Republic: the *Grande Armée Catholique et Royale* – the Great Catholic and Royal Army.

Mostly farmers and artisans, the early combatants will choose as leaders men from their area, endowed with a charisma that will draw crowds: Cathelineau, a simple vendor, unanimously appreciated for his religious fervour and his unparalleled leadership

qualities, and Stofflet, a former game-keeper who will perform unprecedented military feats.

And the nobles? At first, they will not act. Those who had not emigrated remained aloof in their domains, waiting for the storm to end. Eventually, some would accept command, given the insistence of the peasants. “It is up to the nobles to guide us,” Cathelineau summarized, “we are brave like them, but they understand the art of war better.” This is why the insurgents would seek out qualified men like Charette, d’Elbée, Lescure, de La Rochejaquelein, and Bonchamps.

Thus, the Marquis de Bonchamps would make great soldiers out of his men. Lescure would command attacks in Haute-Poitou, while his cousin, Henri de La Rochejaquelein, would go down in history as one of the emblematic figures of the resistance, immortalized by his famous words: “If I advance, follow me; if I retreat, kill me; if I die, avenge me.” However, it is primarily to François Athanase Charette that the War in the Vendée will owe its most unexpected achievements and its most tragic chapters.

The roles reverse

In the first battles on open ground, the Vendéans still feared cannon fire: the shots were followed by a disorderly disbanding. Armed with sticks and pitchforks, those novice warriors seemed defenceless against the well-equipped ranks of the Republic. But, urged on by their leaders and even by their own wives, they quickly learned to fight with skill and flair: crouching at the sound of gunfire, they dodged the shots; then they advanced before the enemy could reload their artillery.

The roles then reversed, and the Blues began to retreat. The spoils were, of course, captured by the Vendéans, who then began to combat properly armed. More valuable than any plunder, however, was the mutual respect reigning among the Catholic ranks.

The Whites, that is, the Vendéans, began by attacking villages considered strongholds of the Republic.

Wearing their large rosaries and emblems of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, they conquered several cities in a few days. Every piece of open ground became a battlefield, every scythe a weapon, every gully a trench.

In a veritable exodus, dozens of parishes rose up, uniting with the nearest commander. Entire families left their homes to head towards combat and the unknown.

And the heroic feats multiplied. Once, during a battle, a republican shouted: “Shoot the one with a red handkerchief!” Now, it was Henri de La Rochejaquelein who always distinguished himself by wearing one. The shots missed him, but, after the battle, the officers begged Henri to remove it, but the leader refused to comply. Faced with this predicament, the peasants decided to all adopt the same accessory, to prevent the enemy from singling out their commander.

From brilliant victories to a sad dispersion

The most brilliant opportunity the Great Army had to reverse the situation

in France was the conquest of Saumur. On June 9th, the supposedly impregnable fortress fell to the counter-revolutionaries. The spoils were considerable: fifty cannons, fifteen thousand rifles, ten thousand prisoners. The way was clear for the capture of Paris and the consequent restoration of the throne.

But, unfortunately, the army scattered with each success. In order to harvest the crops, many returned to their fields, and thus, the dispersion prevented them from taking advantage of the privileged situation. To make matters worse, naiveté led them to release the prisoners, under an oath not to take up arms again.

This was an injudicious decision, for those who were spared, devoid of honour, became murderers at the first opportunity. In the words of General Westermann, “mercy is not revolutionary.”³

Furthermore, there was no coordinated action on the part of the commanders. To be precise, the Grand Army consisted of three divisions that usually operated individually.

Thus, the uprising lost the impact that unity would have provided.

On June 18, the Vendéans seized Angers. They proposed attacking the



Francisco Lecaros

Every piece of open ground became a battlefield, every scythe a weapon, every gully a trench. Entire families left their homes to head towards combat and the unknown. And the heroic feats multiplied.

“Henri de La Rochejaquelein is proclaimed leader by the peasants of La Vendée,”
by Eugène Gluck – Vendée History Museum, Lucs-sur-Boulohne (France)

port of Nantes, which would allow them to unite with the counter-revolutionaries of Brittany, known as the *Chouans*. However, the results of the undertaking were disastrous. Cathelineau was wounded during the battle and, after two weeks of agony, gave his soul to God.

From this moment on, the struggle took on a new aspect: the opposing forces would alternate successes with the royalist warriors. Although the scales seemed to tip in favour of the Blues, at times the Whites miraculously recovered. There was still hope for them.

The ascent of Calvary

October 17th. While the inert body of Queen Marie Antoinette lay in the Madeleine Cemetery in the French capital, the decisive battle of Cholet was being fought.

Despite their numerical superiority, a mysterious panic gripped the Vendéans. The Marquis de Lescure fell, shot in the left eye, d'Elbée was seriously wounded, as was Bonchamps, whose last request was the release of the captives.

The defeat was on the verge of becoming a catastrophe.

Determined to abandon a land doomed to extermination, eighty thousand men crossed the Loire towards Brittany, awaiting English support at the port of Granville. After an odyssey as arduous as it was thankless, the survivors had to return; the episode went down

in history as the Turn of the Galerna – the name given to the northwest wind, responsible for shipwrecks and storms.

With the army disbanded and almost all the combatants dead, the epic was drawing to a close. On December 23, the remaining survivors succumbed in the swamps of Savenay, hunted like beasts by the cruel General Westermann.

Only Charette would resist, with a handful of loyal followers, in a way embodying the glory of the Vendée. Two years later, on March 29, 1796, he would be captured and executed.

The Republic condemned to extermination the region from which its greatest nightmare had emerged. More than half a million men, women, and children perished in fires, drownings, massacres – in short, in the genocide decreed from 1794 onwards. The Whites went down in history, at least the history told by the revolutionaries, as disorganized and fanatical rebels who fought savagely for an unattainable ideal. A complete failure. Was it really so?

Defeated?

Centuries of glory and loyalty of the Church's firstborn nation rested on the shoulders of those humble peasants. On their banners shone the certainty of victory. For the first time, the Revolution found itself facing a power greater than its own.⁴

But, at a certain point, the inexplicable happened. And God seemed

to abandon his own cause. Was it a punishment?

In reality, the Vendean uprising – like many other events – is not a story to be read with human eyes.

Sometimes, behind the greatest failures lie the most exalted glories. Great disappointments pay the price, before God, of unimaginable triumphs.

The Lord of Hosts had deigned to adorn the Vendée banner with the cross, converting that band of invincible warriors into a multitude of martyrs. The fidelity of the righteous was thus sealed, and it was up to divine justice to glorify His chosen ones when it pleased Him, in this life or the next.

There was a material defeat, it is true, but before God there was a triumph. For on this earth battles are lost and won without, however, deciding the outcome of the ultimate war.

In fact, the supreme battle between light and darkness, of which these events constituted a chapter full of sorrows and glory, has not yet ended.

It continues in our days, and will only be concluded when Our Lord Jesus Christ comes in glory and majesty to judge the living and the dead. ✠

The Lord of Hosts had deigned to adorn the Vendéan banner with the cross, converting that band of invincible warriors into a multitude of martyrs

Battle of Fougères, by Julien Le Blant

¹ Cf. CHARLES-ROUX, Jean. Passion et calvarie d'un enfant roi de France. In: ESCANDE, Renaud (Dir.). *Le livre noir de la Révolution Française*. Paris: Du Cerf, 2009, p.163.

² The terms Revolution and Counter-Revolution, when capitalized and mentioned without reference to any specific historical event, are used in these pages in the sense given to them by Dr. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira in his book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*.

³ SECHER, Reynald. La Guerre de Vendée. Guerre civile, génocide, mémoricide. In: ESCANDE, op. cit., p.231.

⁴ Cf. DAWSON, Christopher. *Os deuses da Revolução*. São Paulo: É Realizações, 2018, p.131.

...what the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte are?

Wise and maternal, the Catholic Church establishes different states and degrees in the service of sacred worship. In this hierarchy of functions, the clergy – Bishops, priests, and deacons – who have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, occupy a prominent place.

However, some baptized and confirmed lay people who are deemed worthy may be instituted in the ministries of lector and acolyte. Minister, in Latin, designates a servant, helper, or representative; and ministerium, an office or service.

In the Latin Rite Church, this institution is made through a liturgical act presided over by the Bishop or, in clerical institutes, by the legitimate superior. In this way, without entering the clerical state, they can perform auxiliary functions of a liturgical-religious nature.



Institution to the Ministry of Lector - Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

Thus, the lector is responsible for proclaiming the Word of God in liturgical celebrations. Among other functions, he may read from Sacred Scripture, with the exception of the Gospel;

in the absence of the psalmist, recite the Psalm; and, when there is no deacon, formulate the intentions of the prayer of the faithful. It is also his responsibility to lead the singing, instruct the faithful to receive the Sacraments properly and, when appropriate, prepare those who, on a temporary basis, are to read Sacred Scripture during liturgical acts.

The acolyte, in turn, is instituted to serve the priest and assist the deacon at the altar. He is permitted to distribute Communion as an extraordinary minister and, in special circumstances, to expose and repose the Blessed Sacrament. He is also responsible for instructing altar servers and other faithful who make up the liturgical retinue.

It is worth noting that every candidate to the diaconate must be previously instituted as lector and acolyte. ✦

...that Our Lady left her portrait in Italy?

Christian tradition tells us that in Rossano, in the region of Calabria, Italy, in the 7th century a venerable monk, an ardent devotee of the Virgin Mary, asked and obtained permission from the emperor to convert the cave where he lived into a church dedicated to the Mother of God.

Once all the preparations for construction had been made, Governor Philippicus ordered skilled artists from Byzantium to paint an image of Our Lady at the back of the cave. However, something unexpected happened: the workers noticed that the image painted during the day inexplicably disappeared at nightfall.

Annoyed, the governor appointed a guard to watch over the cave and see

what was happening there. One night, he saw a noble Lady approaching, dressed in white, carrying a beautiful Child in her arms. Enchanted, the sentry allowed them to enter the cave so that they could pray. After some time, the soldier entered the sanctuary and was surprised to see the image of the Lady and the Child magnificently stamped in the place where the artists had previously worked.

The governor was notified, and everyone rushed to the cave and, filled with admiration, exclaimed: “Acheropita!”, from the Byzantine Greek *αχειροποίητα*, meaning “not painted by human hands”. And so the portrait was named: Our Lady of Acheropita. ✦



Our Lady of Achiropita - Cathedral dedicated to her in Rossano (Italy)

Seiliko (CC by-sa 4.0)



Slavery that Frees, Freedom that Enslaves

The Book of Genesis, rich in stirring and dramatic scenes, proffers a veritable treasure of moral teachings. Among these, we can highlight the paradigmatic story of Joseph, the young “dreamer”.



✦ David Camarillo

Slavery!... Such a cruel word, evoking dire and dreadful impressions within us: heavy chains, violent subjugations, horrifying punishments, realities that make us tremble all the more as they distance us from what we cherish so much, freedom. However, as incredible as it may seem, there is a slavery that frees and a freedom that enslaves.

An example of this can be found in the Book of Genesis. Rich in stirring and dramatic scenes, it proffers a veritable treasure of moral teachings. Among these, we can highlight the paradigmatic

story of Joseph, the young “dreamer” (Gen 37:19), which well expresses the contrast between envy and admiration in the human soul.

The most beloved of sons...

Jacob had one daughter and twelve sons, among whom Joseph was the object of special favour: his father loved him “more than any other of his children” (Gen 37:3a). Why?

At first glance, it seems obvious that this preference was based on the fact that Joseph was the child born to him almost at the end of his life. At least that is what the sacred text indicates: “because he was the son of his old age” (Gen 37:3b). However, the explanation may not be complete. If this was the only motivation for Jacob’s paternal predilection, the main object of his affection should have been Benjamin, the last offspring conceived by Rachel (cf. Gen 35:18).

There was certainly something of sublimity in that innocent soul, which not only attracted paternal favour but, above all, won the heart of God Himself. A special grace and

design rested upon Joseph, in whom, from his youth, exceptional rectitude and remarkable supernatural gifts had shone.

...and the most despised among the brothers

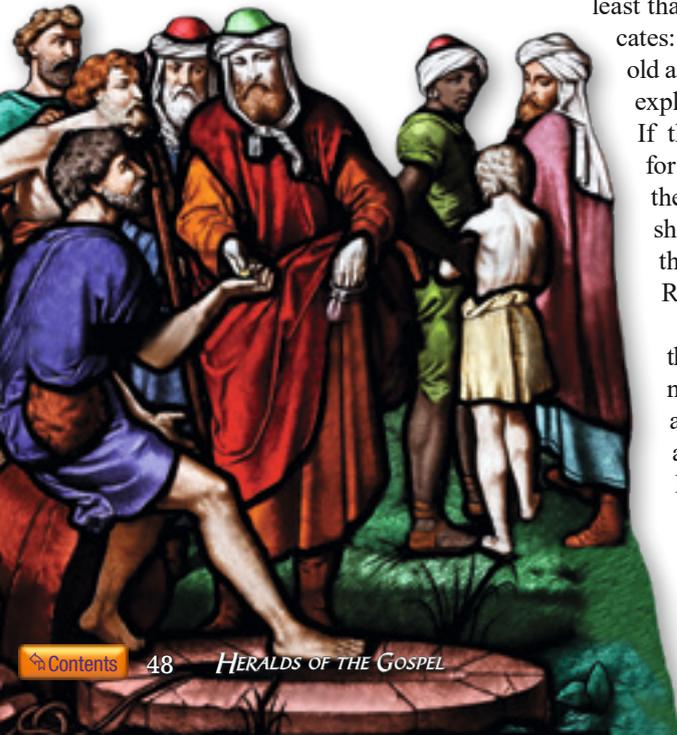
It is characteristic of love to manifest itself. Faithful to this rule, Jacob wished to clothe his favourite son in a multicoloured tunic, as proof of his deep affection. This gesture, however, constituted a test for the brothers... Perceiving that Joseph enjoyed primacy, “they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him” (Gen 37:4).

It was envy that, “when it seizes the soul, does not leave it until it leads it to the most extreme monstrosity,”¹ as St. John Chrysostom rightly observes. In fact, the brothers’ mounting hatred darkened their hearts until it led them to plot one of the most heinous crimes: fratricide.

A freedom that enslaves

Envy! If we examine its etymology, we will encounter an interesting peculiarity: the term comes from the Latin *invidia*, which derives from *invidere*, meaning “to cast an evil eye.”²

The envious person becomes obsessed; they delude themselves, considering the good of their neighbour as an obstacle to their own glory. Thus,



Joseph is sold by his brothers -
Church of St. Peter and
St. Paul Les Mureaux (France)

they expose themselves to terrible consequences: sadness for the virtue of others, hatred, defamation, calumny, joy at the misfortune befalling others, and a long *et cetera*... They do not realize that this vice brings them only culpability and remorse.

This was the sad case of those brothers who, faced with an admiring and innocent soul, did not rest until they had unleashed all their fury against him: “Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits” (Gen 37:20).

Two manifestations of the same vice

However, their malice did not stop at that infamous cry... Soon the voice of hypocrisy was heard:

“What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh” (Gen 37:26-27). And so they did! “Then Midianite traders passed by; and they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver; and they took Joseph to Egypt” (Gen 37:28).

These are two manifestations of the same envy: the radical one, which aims at the destruction and total disappearance of the one who is envied; and the hypocritical one, which neither tolerates nor admires good entirely, but also does not fully adhere to sin or evil. Is he a villain? No, rather indolent, despicable, and mediocre, like Pontius Pilate, who washed his hands of the worst crime in history.

Those poor blind men! Without realizing it, they were more enslaved than Joseph, whom they were actually selling into servitude. He, although

captive, remained free because he did not allow himself to be bound by the fetters of sin. And it would be from this slavery that God would perform great wonders.

Admiration, the presupposition of love

The first element of love is admiration. The commandment to love God above all things presupposes, therefore, *admiring* God in all things. Let us explain: when we esteem someone, we feel the need to enjoy their presence. The same occurs in our love for the

Applying this to our relationship with the Creator, it seems plausible to affirm that *ad-mirari* indicates the movement of the person who turns their attention outside of themselves, in order to seek God.

Understood in this way, admiration could well be called a slavery of love!

A slavery that frees

This deep-seated supernatural relationship bought freedom for Joseph. Indeed, he knew how to see God’s hand behind Pharaoh’s dreams, saving the country from the terrible famine that was to come.

The sovereign, as a sign of affectionate gratitude, freed him from prison and, taking off his own ring, “put it on Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; [...]. Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt” (Gen 41:42-43).

Here we see the reward of the admiring soul: God frees it from the prison of selfishness, to make it dwell in the palaces of charity; He breaks the chains of sin to place, in their stead, the ring, symbol of His indissoluble covenant; freed from the yoke of diabolical slavery, to place around its neck the most precious necklace of the “glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8:21)! ✠



Such is the reward of the admiring soul: God frees him from the prison of selfishness, to make it dwell in the palaces of charity

“Joseph interprets the Pharaoh’s dreams” - Basseenge Gallery, Berlin

Creator, which impels us to the tireless search for reflections of Him in the mirror of the universe, finding no rest until we encounter Him.

Incidentally, the word admiration comes from the Latin *admiratio*. *Mirror* signifies, among other meanings, to look with astonishment, enchantment;³ while *ad* translates as “to” or “towards”.

¹ ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. *Homiliarum in Genesim*. Homilia LXI, n.1: PG 54, 526.

² INVIDEO. In: ERNOUT, Alfred; MEILLET, Alfred. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la Langue Latine*. 4.ed. Paris: Klincksieck, 2001, p.321.

³ Cf. MIRUS. In: ERNOUT; MEILLET, op. cit., p.406.

Contradictory or Complementary Virtues?

While virginity, in its delicacy, is most often associated with fragility, combativeness evokes warfare, often with brutal aspects. They would thus be contradictory virtues, if there were not one person who, through holiness, became the paradigm of both.



✠ Fr. Louis Goyard, EP

Born a shepherdess in an obscure town in a region considered secondary, St. Joan of Arc was a prophet, virgin, queen, warrior, and martyr. And to adorn her with the glory of resembling Him, Our Lord also willed that the *Pucelle* suffer defamation and betrayal from the clergy of her time, the nobles of her nation, and the people she had come to save.

The centuries, however, did her justice, and from the heights of the firmament where the splendour of her holiness raised her, she contemplated her adversaries being swept away by history and buried, some in oblivion and others in infamy. Finally, St. Pius X recognized the heroicness of her virtue, raising her to the honours of the altar.

* * *

In her virginal and enchanting fragility, the holy shepherdess was called to live in a military camp where, sadly, the language is so often impure, and disreputable company is seldom missing. However, she shone there like a candle of purest wax in the depths of night. Her figure seems to radiate a brightness that dazzles the eye like newly fallen snow struck by the sun. According to testimonies from the time, she shone with such glowing vir-

ginity that her mere presence bolstered the practice of chastity.

Delicate as a flower, she was nevertheless intolerant of any kind of sin or vice: the virgin of Orléans is numbered among those uncontaminated souls in whom compromise, accord, or complicity with evil was never found.

In fact, the only serious form of chastity is that which despises and rejects impurity; otherwise, it soon betrays itself as false and ephemeral.

* * *

Her virginal delicacy, however, seemed fated to a state of contradiction.



Lúcio César Rodrigues

First Communion of St. Joan of Arc - Basilica of Bois-Chenu, Domrémy-la-Pucelle (France)

Indeed, one of the most intense activities that man can engage in is undoubtedly combat, which demands maximum agility and strength – physical, and above all, moral. To uphold the rights of God and of justice, it becomes necessary to bend the vigour of evil and finally overcome it. Thus, fragility proves to be incompatible with the warrior state.

Now, history tells us of the virtually impossible feats of arms that St. Joan of Arc accomplished. Military heroism shone in her with extraordinary intensity because it was allied with innocence: she showed gallantry among her people, gallantry on the battlefield, gallantry in the face of the enemy, and finally, gallantry before the tribunal of betrayal during the interrogations of her infamous judges. This is gallantry taken to its fullest extreme.

Thus, we find in her the fragile virgin, shepherdess and warrior, who changes the course of European history to fulfil God's plans and save France.

* * *

How, then, can the apparent contradiction be resolved, which stems from the fact that combativeness is often presented as synonymous with brutality, and purity regarded as a companion of weakness?

In St. Joan of Arc, the entire warrior ideal of the Middle Ages dwells alongside the ideal of the Christian virgin. It is contrary to the fragility of a virgin to be a warrior, but, when it comes to an unblemished virginity, this confers such strength upon the woman that, without making her masculine, it equals her to man in the capacity to subdue evil and execute divine designs.

In the liberator of France, virginity, being linked to the heroism of fire and blood, attracts the attention of the imagination and the senses more than any other form of virginity; on the other hand, allying itself with feminine weakness and arms, this virginity lends an entirely new brilliance to the military condition. Amidst the devastation, dust, and smoke, her armour

made her purity gleam all the more brightly during combat, because she lived spotlessly among men.

St. Joan of Arc is the example of the Catholic virgin, so chaste that she could live in that environment without being contaminated, and could be a warrior – the specific office of a man – while remaining a virgin and feminine, haloed with that pearly virginity, which possesses such pugnacity, courage, daring, and self-assurance that it makes impurity cower. Before someone like her, impropriety has no better chance of resistance than a tumour awaiting the surgical knife.

Her virginal fortitude proclaims, from the heights of Heaven where she now dwells, that purity is only authentic when capable of fighting with entire ardour, and that only the pure soul is equipped for true combativity.

Sanctity is one, and within it, a single virtue cannot exist without the others... ✦



St. Joan of Arc -
Place des Pyramides, Paris



The Most Sublime Moment

The hour of the holocaust one makes of oneself to God is the most sublime moment in a man's life. It is, consequently, the moment in which he is willing to face supreme risks for a true and extremely high ideal. It is the moment in which he presents himself to suffer all that he must suffer, ready to stagger in pain under the cross, as Our Lord did, contributing to the fulfilment of history and of God's plan for humanity.

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira