



# HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Nº 222 - April 2026



*An Invitation  
to Filial Intimacy*



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## ***May the Lord Grant You True Humility***

**I**f you are gladdened by the fact that you feel small before God, very well; but it seems to me – forgive me, for I am nothing – that it would be more perfect not to rejoice in this. It would be better to pay no attention to yourself. The less you look at yourself, the better you will see God. May the Lord grant you true humility, but, having felt it, continue forward, do not be caught up in humility, for you will be caught up in yourself... Go forward, rise to the Lord; when you are with Him, then you will see how you truly feel like nothing...

Do not look at yourself; contemplate Jesus on the Cross, look at God who loves you just as you are. Do not measure your love, because it is yours; measure that which God has for you. Do not investigate or scrutinize what you have in your heart, because it is also yours and you will waste your time: you will find nothing.

If you throw a grain of salt into the sea, it disappears, for the salt dissolves in the water, and then the sea and the grain of salt become one. But if, instead of the tiny grain of salt, you throw a grain of sand, it will remain small and stay in the sea, but it will not dissolve...

Let us strive to be that grain of salt that dissolves in God and disappears, and not the grain of sand. It is better to dispense with ourselves so that we may ascend to Him, for otherwise we will remain always stagnant in our own humility.

ST. RAFAEL ARNAIZ.

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



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

*I noticed that when priests consecrate the Host, they drop a fragment from it into the chalice. I would like to know what this means according to the Church and what your impression was the first time you did it.*

*Javier Acuña Coello – Via email*

This gesture originated in the early centuries of the Christian era. The rite, initially called *fermentum*, was an expression of unity between the Masses celebrated by the priest and the Bishop, especially that of Rome, the Pope. The Pope would send, through acolytes, a fragment of the Host he had consecrated, so that the priests could place it in the chalice they had consecrated, thus expressing that it was the same Eucharist.

Over time, this practice came to suggest other interpretations, without losing its original meaning of communion. It came to be called *commixtio*, that is, the *mixing* of the small fragment of the Holy Host inserted by the priest into the chalice with the consecrated wine. Its spiritual meaning is contained in the prayer quietly recited by the presider during the recitation of the Lamb of God: “May this mingling

of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.”

By consecrating the host and wine separately, the Liturgy signifies the separation of the Body and Blood of Christ, that is, His immolation, sacramentally renewed – in an unbloody manner – in the Holy Mass.

However, Jesus Christ died and rose again, and it is the Risen Lord whom we receive in Communion. Therefore, when the priest performs the *commixtio*, he points to the Resurrection of the Saviour and our own, as suggested by the abovementioned prayer.

Personally, not only on the occasion of the first Mass, but in all those I have celebrated, the *commixtio* is a moment of special intimacy between the priest and Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. ✠

*Can a person who was baptized in an evangelical church, and who desires in their heart to follow the Catholic religion, be baptized through the catechumenate?*

*Lucio Couguil – Via email*

Dear Lucio, essentially your question is: is Baptism administered by another Christian denomination considered valid by the Catholic Church?

Canon 869 of the *Code of Canon Law* clearly states that Baptisms conferred in non-Catholic ecclesial communities may be valid or invalid. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the matter – natural water –, the formula used – “[Name], I baptized you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” – and the minimum faith necessary for the realization of what the Church intends with the Sacrament – belief in the mystery of the Trinity, in the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and in the mystery of Redemption.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in number 1256, teaches that “In case of necessity, any person, even someone not baptized, can baptize, if he has the required intention. The intention required is to will to do what the Church

does when she baptizes, and to apply the Trinitarian baptismal formula.”

Given the seriousness of this question, the Church in the different countries, after careful analysis, determines in which Christian community’s Baptism is valid, in which it is dubious, and finally, in which it is certainly invalid.

For this reason, I advise you to seek guidance from your parish priest. If the validity of Baptism in another Christian denomination is confirmed, in the case of an adult, he will have to receive a simple Rite of Admission into Full Communion with the Catholic Church. In addition, if he is properly prepared, he may also receive the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation.

On the other hand, if the validity of the Baptism is doubtful, the Sacrament may be administered conditionally; however, if it is found to be truly invalid, Baptism will be administered in the usual manner. ✠

## A DESIRE TO COMMUNICATE, AWAITING RECIPROCITY

When history is complete, it will form a splendid and touching account of God’s desire to communicate with mankind, and its response – or lack thereof – to the divine call. In this sense, the expression in Scripture is poignant:

“O that my people would listen to me! [...] I would soon subdue their enemies. [...] I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you” (Ps 81:13-14, 16).

This relationship, however, has clearly evolved over time. In the Old Testament, we first notice God’s communication with Israel through thunder, fire and earthquakes; then His voice became more human, as it was echoed by the prophets.

Finally, with the inauguration of the New Covenant, we hear St. Paul proclaim: “In these last days He has spoken to us by a Son” (Heb 1:2). Throughout these progressive stages, we find a recurring characteristic: the Lord manifests Himself to the human race with increasing intimacy.

Now, in recent centuries, Marian apparitions have multiplied, far out of proportion with previous eras. By introducing His Mother into this divine communion with mankind the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity demonstrates His unfailing disposition to consider us as part of His family.

The messages transmitted by her deal, in essence, with the same points; and yet the manner in which Our Lady communicates with us is increasingly intimate, manifesting ever greater levels of forgiveness, mercy, affection and tenderness.

In a certain sense, this new relationship was inaugurated by Our Lady of Good Counsel: although the fresco has a much more remote origin, its history entered the Western Christian world in 1467. However, there is no message here, no manifestations; there was only a prodigy at the beginning, as a harbinger of countless miracles and graces of close contact with the sacred.

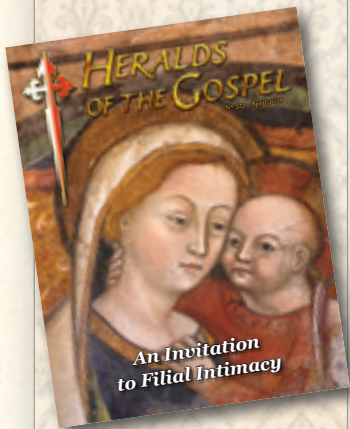
Paradoxically, her wordless eloquence is a more precious, personal, intimate communication, unique to each moment. It is her good counsel to each of her children.

In the immortal prayer, the *Memorare*, we pray: “Never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thine intercession was left unaided.” And therefore it is apropos that Our Lady of Genazzano has become the counsellor of so many Popes. She is God’s counsel to every man, no longer saying only “do whatever He tells you” (Jn 2:5), but showing us how to be pleasing to Him.

Above all, the Mother of Good Counsel – because She is our Mother – feels special compassion for our weakness and grants us not only her good counsel, but also the strength to put it into practice.

This is why Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira attributed such an important role to her in these days when human weakness has reached a historic peak. It will be from her hands that, in the Reign of Mary, human fidelity to divine appeals will spring forth.

For the Heralds of the Gospel – and for all those who receive their influence – this relationship with the Most Holy Virgin has a palpable reflection in the life example of Dona Lucilia, whose 150th birthday is celebrated this April. Her presence, full of kindness and gratuitous love, so rare in the modern world, invites us to an extraordinary intimacy and a tender reciprocity. ✦



*Our Lady of Good Counsel - Shrine dedicated to her in Genazzano (Italy)*

Photo: Tiago Galvão



# What Should a Catholic Mother Be Like?

Everyday experience shows us that a Christian wife usually gives rise to a family in which love for God, the practice of sacramental life and love of neighbour remain alive. The joy of family life depends to a large extent on the mother who, with her generosity, softens rough edges and tensions.

## PREFIGURES OF MARY MOST HOLY

The Old Testament and Jewish tradition attest to a high regard for the moral dignity of women, which is expressed particularly in an attitude of trust in the Lord, in prayer for the gift of motherhood, and in supplications to God for the salvation of Israel from the attacks of its enemies. [...]

“A good wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels” (Prv 31:10). Wisdom literature describes a woman’s faithfulness to the divine covenant as the pinnacle of her abilities and the source of the highest admiration. [...] In these female figures, in which the miracles of divine grace are revealed, She – Mary, the Mother of the Lord – can already be glimpsed as the greatest woman.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*General Audience*, 10/4/1996

## GREATEST EXAMPLE OF MATERNAL LOVE

Hence the Church, in her apostolic work also, justly looks to her who brought forth Christ, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin, that through the Church He may be born and may increase in the hearts of the faithful also. The Virgin in her own life lived an example of that maternal love, by which

it behoves that all should be animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church for the regeneration of men.

ST. PAUL VI. *Lumen gentium*.  
Second Vatican Council, 21/11/1964

## REWARD FOR A LIFE OF RENUNCIATION

By her “yes,” She [Mary] helped give a human face to the source of all mercy and benevolence: the face of Jesus. [...]

This is the face of God that Mary allowed to take shape and grow within her womb, completely transforming her life. It is the face She proclaimed through the joyful yet delicate light of her eyes while bearing Him in her womb; the face whose beauty She contemplated daily in her home as Jesus grew as a child, boy and young man; and the face She followed with the heart of a humble disciple, as He walked the paths of His mission, all the way to the Cross and the Resurrection.

To do so, She too laid aside every defence, renouncing expectations, claims and comforts – as mothers so often do – consecrating her life without reserve to the Son She had received by grace, so that She might, in turn, give Him back to the world.

LEO XIV.  
*Homily*, 1/1/2026

## MOTHERHOOD IN LIGHT OF THE CHURCH AND MARY

Motherhood is a sublime gift that the Church exalts. How could it not, given that it believes in and recognizes the beginning of salvation, of its very existence, in the virginal motherhood of Mary Most Holy, who gave birth to Christ? [...]

Everyday experience shows us that a Christian wife usually gives rise to a family in which love for God, participation in the Sacraments, and love of neighbour remain alive. Likewise, the harmony, serenity, and joy of family life depend largely on the woman, wife, and mother who, with her intuition, tact, affection, patience, and generosity, softens rough edges and tensions. She lifts spirits and offers a welcoming haven when problems arise at any stage of life.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*Homily*, 10/5/1990

## SHE WHO CLAIMS THE CHIEF PLACE IN LOVE

Domestic society being confirmed, therefore, by this bond of love, there should flourish in it that “order of love,” as St. Augustine calls it. This order includes both the primacy of the husband with regard to the wife and children, the ready subjection of the

wife and her willing obedience, which the Apostle commends. [...] For if the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.

PIUS XI.  
*Casti connubii*,  
31/12/1930

### THE HEART OF THE FAMILY

As experience teaches, woman is above all the heart of the family. She is the one who gives life and the primary educator, obviously supported by her husband, and systematically sharing with him the entire scope of parental educational duties.

It is known, however, that the human body ceases to live when the heart stops functioning. The analogy is quite clear. The woman who acts as the heart of the family is indispensable. [...]

This vocation – essentially linked to the divine gift of motherhood – is also expressed in the mission of wife and mother through the transmission of the truth of the faith and ethical values.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*Speech*, 13/6/1987

### THE TEACHINGS OF THE TRUE CATHOLIC MOTHER

In this initial religious education, mothers have a task that is as important and dignified as it is beautiful and moving.

Mothers, do you teach your children Christian prayers? Do you prepare your children, in accord with the priests, for the Sacraments of early childhood: Confession, Communion, Confirmation? Do you accustom them, when they are ill, to think of Christ



Dona Lucilia with her son, Plinio

*In this initial religious education, a mother has a task as important and dignified as it is beautiful and moving. This is how she builds the Church*

suffering, to invoke the help of Our Lady and the saints? Do you pray the Rosary as a family? [...]

Remember: this is how you build the Church.

ST. PAUL VI.  
*General Audience*, 11/8/1976

### LOVE THAT IS READY FOR UNCONDITIONAL SACRIFICE

Motherhood can be a source of joy, but it can also become a source of suffering, and sometimes of great disappointments. In this case, love becomes a test, often heroic, that takes a heavy toll on a mother's heart. [...]

How extraordinary at times is their participation in the care of the Good Shepherd! How they must struggle against difficulties and dangers! How often they are called to face real "wolves", determined to carry off and scatter the flock! [...]

Their guiding principle is Christ, who has revealed the love bestowed upon us by the Father. A woman who believes in Christ finds powerful support precisely in this love that endures all. It is a love that allows her to believe that whatever she does for a child, whether conceived or born, an adolescent or an adult, she does at the same time for a child of God.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*Homily*, 24/4/1994

### MOTHERS WHO REFLECT THE PERFECT LIGHT OF MARY

In the light of Mary, the Church sees in the face of women the reflection of a beauty which mirrors the loftiest sentiments of which the human heart is capable: the self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work; the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*Redemptoris Mater*, 25/3/1987



## “No night is eternal”



✠ Fr. Carlos Adriano Santos, EP

*What lesson can we draw from the Resurrection of Christ for the present epoch?*

**T**he unalterable regularity with which the celebrations of the Liturgical Year unfold, despite the fluctuations of earthly events, is a demonstration of the celestial majesty of the Church, always loftily surpassing the capricious ebb and flow of human passions.

Grand, but not indifferent, she uses the Liturgy to manifest herself as a solicitous Mother, reviving in her children the highest sense of Christian existence. And the apex of this motherliness is exercised in the celebration of Easter, upon recalling the principal event of the life of her Mystical Spouse in this world: the destruction of the sepulchral prison and passage from death to life.

What application can this incomparable episode have for the Church today and for us individually?

The impiety of the members of the Sanhedrin, who thought everything was ended when they sealed the tomb and guarded it with soldiers after the consummation of the deicide, contributed to exalting the greatest miracle in history: the

Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This happening, the most evident proof of His divinity, also became the greatest sign of hope in the promise of an everlasting life.

Over the centuries, the Catholic Church – the immortal Mystical Body of Christ – has often seemed defeated under the sepulchral weight of the most terrible trials. It has been abandoned, disgraced, persecuted, betrayed; and today it experiences moments of an apparent night...

However, the same supernatural force that

brought about the Resurrection of Christ dwells in the Church, assuring her of constant victory over her enemies. Therefore, in a way incomprehensible to human perception, from the seeming “death” in which she lies, in the consideration of its detractors, she has always “resurrected” and will always “resurrect.”

The same is true in our lives, if considered from a Christian perspective. We can sweeten our hardships with many a legitimate lenitive, but none will be as sweet as the stance inspired by the figure of the Mother – image of the Church – at the foot of the Cross: there She stood, overflowing with hope in the Resurrection.

At times we go through trials, difficulties of all kinds, abandonment, betrayals, darkness... However, a restorative, “resurrecting” force also dwells within us: the grace of God, which should fill us with hope for eternity, especially in moments of pain, which acquire a new meaning, a noble sense, and a reason for supernatural joy with the expectation of a resurrection that is all the more glorious the greater our sufferings.

Thus, “Christ’s resurrection teaches us that no history is so marked by disappointment or sin that it cannot be visited by hope. No fall is definitive, no night is eternal, no wound is destined to remain open forever. However distant, lost or unworthy we may feel, there is no distance that can extinguish the unfailing power of God’s love.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the great lesson of Easter, the great consolation for righteous men who love God and His Church above all else: Christ died and rose again. The immortal Church – and also her children, who participate in this immortality as long as they do not lose hope – always rises again from its calvaries and its tombs, glorious as Christ in the radiant dawn of His Resurrection. ✠

<sup>1</sup> LEO XIV. *General Audience*, 8/10/2025.



The Resurrection of Christ, by Fra Angelico - San Marco Museum, Florence (Italy)

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# The Church that Jesus Desired



✠ Fr. Manuel Rodríguez, EP

**A**mong the countless eloquent expressions that French ingenuity has devised throughout the centuries to express certain attitudes of the human spirit, we find the following: “*Si j’étais le Bon Dieu...* – If I were the Good God...” This refers to the age-old temptation that the human soul has to judge its own conceptions as superior to those of the Almighty Lord, a tendency that would lead us, if by some absurdity this were given to us, to “write” a history different from the one God intended.

This thought may well occur to us when we analyse the beginnings of the Church, as reflected in this Sunday’s Liturgy.

In the Gospel we find that handful of men, who were to preach the Gospel to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15), crushed by discouragement and fear, enclosed within the four walls of the Upper Room, lacking a communion of criteria – as demonstrated by the attitude of St. Thomas in doubting the testimony of his companions (cf. Jn 20:25) and fragile in faith... How we would have imagined a more “perfect” nascent Church!

However, Our Lord gives us a lesson in omnipotence. Just as He entered that place despite the doors being “locked, for fear of the Jews” (Jn 20:19), there would be no insurmountable obstacle for Him when it came to guiding in its first steps the institution He had founded. This is well proven by the first reading, in which we see that same little seed, seemingly so defective, after Pentecost.

The disciples’ cowardice turned into “exultation and sincerity of heart” (Acts 2:46), so that they came to be esteemed by the very Jews who had previously frightened them.

Disharmony gave way to “communal life,” by which “all who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:42, 44). And those doors, closed by human fears and a narrow spirit of partisanship, opened with such faith, boldness, and desire for conquest that “every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Yes... How different our criteria are from God’s! How different “our” foundation of the Church would have been from that which Our Lord Jesus Christ desired. He wanted to demonstrate to us that it is normal for every divine work to be marked in its beginning and, above all, throughout its development, by difficulty and suffering, just as, in the second reading, St. Peter teaches the first Christians: it is “for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials” (1 Pt 1:6). In this way, the contrast between human contingency and divine omnipotence gives God the glory that is due to Him.

A beautiful lesson for us who so often choose, to guide us in our lives, criteria that are too personal and divorced from the divine designs.

Let us, then, analyse with supernatural eyes the circumstances that we must undergo, especially when they hinder us, considering that God always sends trials to sanctify us, as He did with His nascent Church and throughout all the centuries. ✠

*If I were given the opportunity today to guide the early Church, would I do so as Our Lord did?*



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The Incredulity of St. Thomas, detail from “Maestà”, by Duccio di Buoninsegna – Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Siena (Italy)

## The Process of Conversion



✠ Fr. Eduardo Caballero, EP

*Jesus is willing to accompany us in person all the way to the Emmaus of our whims, in order to lead us back to the Jerusalem of fidelity*

**T**he spiritual life is a process. No one becomes holy overnight, and no one falls from one day to the next; everything happens step by step, both ascending and descending, for this is the normal path in the state of trial in which we find ourselves on this earth.

This was the case with the disciples of Emmaus, who went through a conversion process wisely and delicately guided by Our Lord Jesus Christ, along the way they travelled with Him.

We too are accompanied by Jesus at certain moments in our existence. And He is willing to go with us to the Emmaus of our whims, to help us to return to the Jerusalem of faithfulness.

The Gospel does not hide that those two disciples were sadly leaving for Emmaus, certainly their hometown. This signified a return to mediocrity, as it was some years after having been invited to rise far above the modest horizons of an ordinary Israelite.

They conversed and argued along the way, trying to reconcile the terrible events of the Passion with the worldly idea they had of the Messiah.

And they were unable to do so, because their mentality was wrong, their route was mistaken.

Even physically they were going in the opposite direction from the Messiah, who conceived

His public life as a long journey towards the Holy City, where He would consummate His redemptive mission: “When the days drew near for Him to be received up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Lk 9:51).

However, along the road of their discouragement, Our Lord Himself came to meet them.

First in intention, last in action. The Divine Master’s deepest intention was the conversion of those

disciples, prepared along the way through fellowship and consummated in the reception of the Holy Eucharist: “Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how He was made known to them in the breaking of bread.” (Lk 24:35).

But was St. Luke really referring to the Holy Eucharist? This is a much-debated question among exegetes throughout history, and even today.<sup>1</sup> However, regarding the expression “breaking of bread,” it is necessary to note that the words in the original Greek text are identical to those used by the same Evangelist to refer to the Eucharistic Celebration in several passages of the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, and despite the contrary opinion of distinguished commentators,<sup>3</sup> it is legitimate to assume, based on current exegesis, that Jesus celebrated the Eucharist with the two disciples. And it was precisely that Holy Communion that brought about a radical transformation in them: from sceptics, they became faithful; from fearful, they became courageous.<sup>4</sup>

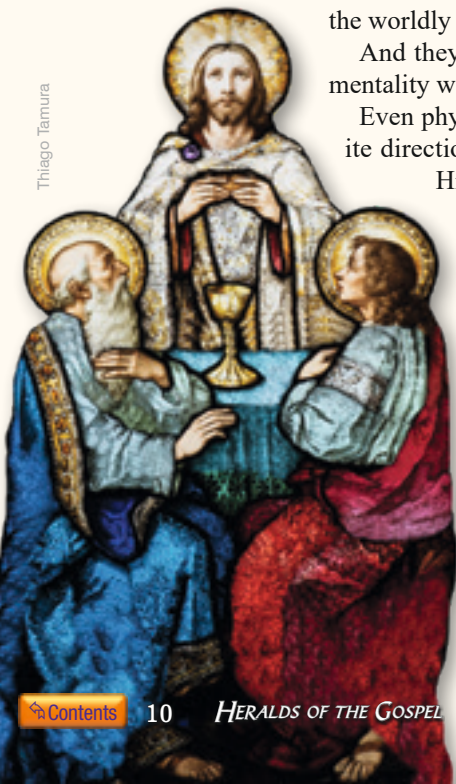
And what about me? Am I in a process of conversion to God or of distancing myself from Him? Do I recognize Jesus walking beside me and explaining the Holy Scriptures to me? Or am I also “blind”? What path am I taking in my life? Am I heading towards Jerusalem or Emmaus? Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to not permit us to stray from the path to our salvation. ✠

<sup>1</sup> Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. One of the Most Beautiful Encounters in History. In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2014, v.I, p.306-307.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts 2: 42, 46; 20: 7, 11; 27, 35. In this regard, see: CRIMELLA, Matteo. *Luca. Introduzione, traduzione e commento*. Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 2015, p.372.

<sup>3</sup> For example: RICCIOTTI, Giuseppe. *Vita di Gesù Cristo*. Cles: Mondadori, 2008, p.710.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. RODRÍGUEZ, SJ, Alonso. *Ejercicio de perfección y virtudes cristianas*. 3.ed. Madrid: Testimonio, 1995, p.1150.



Thiago Tamura

Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus - St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Green Bay (United States)

# Whose Voice Do I Listen To?



✚ Fr. Fabio Hideki Kobayashi, EP

**I**t is moving to analyse how Our Lord Jesus Christ used everyday imagery to teach a predominantly agricultural and pastoral people. In this sense, the words gathered from this Sunday’s Gospel must have touched certain fibres of the soul of those people in a special way.

The sheepfolds, protected by stone or wood enclosures, had at that time a single gate, which was guarded by a watchman while the shepherds rested. The watchman only opened this entrance for the legitimate shepherds, who called their respective sheep. These, recognizing the voice of their guide, separated themselves from the others and followed him along the way.

This reality well represents the way Our Lord acts. As the “gate for the sheep” (Jn 10:7), He is the model to be followed by all – for we were created in His image and likeness – as well as the One who, through Redemption, opens the way to salvation for us.

“The sheep hear his voice” (Jn 10:3), which constantly invites us to abandon the ways of sin and embark on the path of virtue. Now, Christ calls all the sheep, but only those who consider Him as their Shepherd follow Him. There is, therefore, a separation between those who have learned to recognize the timbre of His voice and those who pursue other paths.

Regardless of historical circumstances, in each generation the Good Shepherd calls, through the voice of His ministers, new sheep, who will discern the unmistakable timbre of truth. Let us not be deceived: through the gift of faith received in Baptism, the faithful have a supernatural sense – which Theology calls *sensus fidei* – to recognize which is the voice to be followed.

Now, to be saved it is not enough to hear the voice; it is necessary to follow the shepherd. And the reading of the Acts of the Apostles shows us how. The first Pope is preaching for the first time after Pentecost, when the drama of the Passion was still alive throughout Jerusalem. He, however,

proclaims the truths as they are, without the slightest fear, producing an immense shock, with immediate fruit: “What are we to do?” (Acts 2:37), the crowds ask.

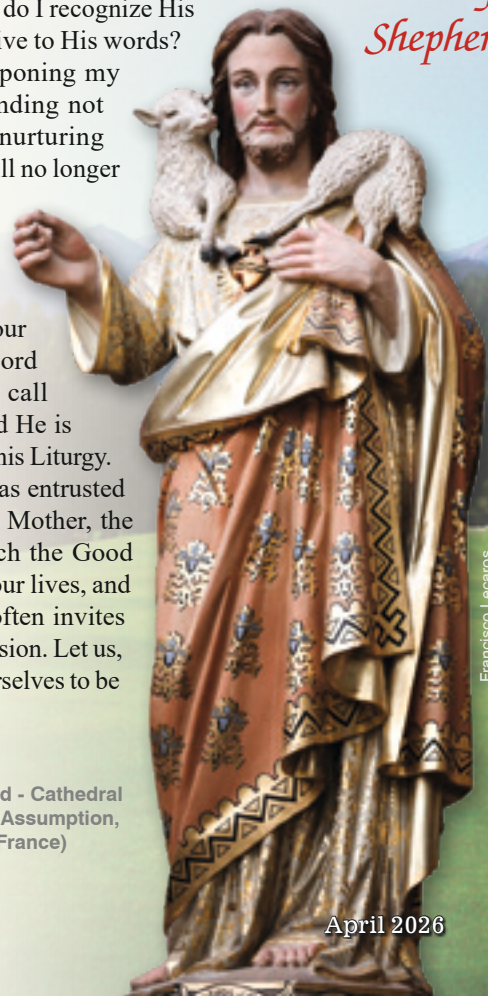
They listened to the shepherd’s voice and their conversion was proven by the change in their way of acting and behaving! St. Peter makes the need for this change clear: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you” (Acts 2:38). This is the result of using the door of truth and not seeking to jump over the wall, in dissimulation, like the thief: on that day three thousand Baptisms were performed.

And can I truly affirm with the psalmist that “the Lord is my shepherd” (Ps 22:1)? When He calls me, do I recognize His voice? Am I attentive to His words?

Or do I keep postponing my conversion, pretending not to hear Him and nurturing the hope that He will no longer demand anything from me?

If I am in this situation, I must not despair: until our last breath, Our Lord always returns to call each one of us, and He is returning to me in this Liturgy. Furthermore, He has entrusted us with a merciful Mother, the door through which the Good Shepherd entered our lives, and the voice that so often invites the world to conversion. Let us, therefore, allow ourselves to be guided by her! ✚

*Amidst the turmoil of the modern world, am I, like a true sheep, heeding the voice of the only true Shepherd?*



The Good Shepherd - Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Montauban (France)

Ricardo Hucke

Francisco Lecaros

# Genazzano: a Lifelong Devotion

Luiz Fransisco Beccari

Before the holy fresco, no one can remain excluded from the scene as a mere spectator. Near the Mother of Good Counsel, there is only one position to take: to unite oneself to that Child and let oneself be carried by Our Lady. That is, to make oneself a son!

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

**I**n our filial relations with the Mother of God, understanding the fundamentals of Mariology undoubtedly plays an important role in this relationship; however, this is not everything, nor is it the most relevant aspect.

The primordial factor in our relationship with the Blessed Virgin always consists in a sensible grace of a mystical nature, a supernatural experience that helps us “savour,” in the depths of our soul, the ineffable, compassionate and overflowing goodness that emanates from her maternal gaze.

This grace is frequently manifested in connection with the perplexities and uncertainties afflicting us throughout life, or in the midst of a terrible spiritual trial. It could even be said that, when people nurture a certain reticence regarding devotion to Our Lady, it is a sign that they have not yet experienced a great hardship...

The realization of how much Mary loves us and desires to help

us in resolving our concerns, makes a sentiment of indescribable gratitude blossom within us for benefits so undeservedly received.

The mystical experiential perception of such goodness, such capacity to forgive, to heal wounds and blot out sins, such a welcoming disposition toward any poor unfortunate who presents himself before her, however grave his state of soul, gives rise to a personal, intimate and filial bond with the Blessed Virgin. It is a tightly fixed bond, since it is rooted in the very fabric of our lives, and involves all aspects of our existence; whether afflictions, trials and failures, or joys, hopes and successes.

### *The genesis of a devotion*

During 1967, filial love for Our Lady, and the very bond of Sacred Slavery, had already taken deep root in my soul. Nevertheless, grace would take yet another initiative, which would mark my life forever: the “encounter” with the Mother of Good Counsel.

In December of that year, Dr. Plinio suffered a serious diabetic crisis, which culminated in an emergency surgery at the Syrian-Lebanese Hospital, and the amputation of four toes of his right foot. On that occasion, I received the enormous grace of personally assisting him. This lasted from the onset of the illness, when he was still in a regimen of repose in his apartment, in the company of his loving mother Dona Lucilia, until the final phase of convalescence.

A few months before the symptoms of the illness appeared, Dr. Plinio had providentially come upon a book on *Mater Boni Consilii* by Monsignor George Francis Dillon, an Irish missionary who had lived for some time at the shrine of Genazzano. Written in English, the publication had been translated into French, the language in which he read it.

He was greatly impressed by the extraordinary facts that the book narrated about the history of the fresco, and

the supernatural phenomena observed in it, especially the continual changes of colour and facial expression. However, although he had attentively followed the gentle and discreet movement of grace in his soul, it was not clear enough for him to discern any sign of a change of phase therein, or of a new course in his relations with Our Lady.

In addition to the discomfort and suffering that his diabetes and the post-operative phase entailed, Dr. Plinio was experiencing a terrible dark night of the soul, related to the innumerable disappointments he faced within the closest circles of his apostolate, as well as to the continuity of his work. Years later, he would affirm that this spiritual trial caused him much more suffering than his physical illness.

On December 16, while still convalescing from the operation in his room at the Syrian-Lebanese Hospital, Dr. Plinio received a visit from a group of disciples, some of whom were from the State of Minas Gerais. One of them had asked a friend, travelling through Italy, to bring him a picture of the *Madonna del Buon Consiglio di Genazzano*, and now wanted to present it to Dr. Plinio.

They unwrapped the framed print of the *Madonna* and rested it on his lap. He was at that moment reclining in the hospital bed, supported by several pillows. He took it in his hands and, visibly moved, contemplated her in silence for a period of twenty minutes, interrupted only by brief exclamations:

“What a magnificent image! Impressive, extraordinary! Look, She seems to want to speak. her colours change. How kind, and motherly! She is smiling, desiring to help!”

As Monsignor Dillon<sup>1</sup> comments in his book, the printed copies of the fresco in Genazzano are sometimes miraculous. As he beheld the picture, Dr. Plinio saw proof of the changes of colour and expression that are so frequent in the original. And, as if by a caress from her, he understood that Mary Most Holy somehow told

him: “My son, do not be troubled. Have confidence, for your work will be accomplished, and you will fulfil your mission entirely.”

Referring to this episode, Dr. Plinio would later reveal: “At the moment I looked at the picture, I had the full impression that the image took life, smiled and made me understand, by facial variation, that I should have complete confidence.” *Mater Boni Consilii*’s smile was the affectionate response to the perplexities and questions that afflicted him.

Contemplating my spiritual father receive this mystical grace left indelible marks on my soul, opening a new horizon in my relationship with Mary Most Holy, which would gradually intensify over the years, becoming the very spinal column of my devotion to her, under the particular invocation of the Mother of Good Counsel of Genazzano.

### *Remote origin, and relationship shrouded in mystery*

The fresco of the *Madonna del Buon Consiglio* is truly a “pilgrim” image full of imponderables, the remotest origin of which is shrouded in mystery. We know that the image had already been in Scutari, Albania, for more than seven centuries prior to its migration to Genazzano, on the outskirts of Rome, in 1467.

What is its true origin? What ingenious artist painted it? Was it only the fruit of human talent, or did angelic contribution share an equal part? Did it emerge from supernatural inspiration, or an apparition of the Mother of God? Is the enigmatic embroidery on the Child Jesus’ collar merely ornamental, or can words in an unknown language be read there concerning His mission? These are some of the questions arising in the mind of a devout observer who analyses the fresco’s richness of detail, reflected in the posture, gestures and very garments of its august personages.

But nothing attracts our attention more than the heavenly relationship,

there portrayed between Mother and Son, the contemplation of which has always delighted me:

“In a gesture of intense affection, overflowing with love, He puts His right hand about His Mother’s noble and delicate neck, while, with His left, He vigorously holds onto the collar of her dress, as if to say: ‘You are all mine!’ This moving and divine embrace is so categorical that His right eye seems to stray slightly from its normal alignment due to His emphatic manner of pressing His cheek against that of His Most Holy Mother.

“Despite having a truly childlike expression, the Divine Infant is nevertheless devoid of the least sign of superficiality, so typical of that life phase. On the contrary, there shines forth from Him, like an ocean of seriousness, the entire depth and breadth of the understanding, the entire force of the will, and entire elevation and nobility of sentiments. Moreover, He has the highest awareness of what His Mother represents, of the interior paradise that She offers Him. [...]

“By His attitude, the God-Child seems to say to all: ‘If you want something from Me, ask for it through My Mother, and you will be attended to.’”<sup>2</sup>

Our Lady’s head rests lightly on that of the Child, seeming to indicate the total union – one would almost say, unity – existing between them, above all expressed in the exchange of gazes. And how they look at each other! Theirs seems to be one and the same gaze!

She appears to confide to us: “My child, the Most High has placed wonders in Me, never imagined by the Angels or Saints of Heaven. For this reason, there are mysteries of God that the blessed spirits only come to know by penetrating my gaze. And there are mysteries that they will only understand in contemplating this exchange of gazes between Mother and Son.”

Of the countless images or paintings known to me, depicting the Blessed Virgin with the Divine Infant in her arms, none displays this union as

much as the Genazzano fresco. There is something in the scene that seems to suggest to those who admirably analyse it: “If you want to know the Child, you must see Him in her gaze; likewise, to know her completely, you must see her in His gaze.” No one shall penetrate this exchange of gazes without allowing himself to be attracted by the sacred and divine intimacy between Mother and Son. So many marvels are contained therein, that eternity will be insufficient to reveal its secrets!

It is precisely this overflow of love and affection that I experience every time I approach *Mater Boni Consilii*. To be before the sacred fresco, to allow myself to be pervaded by this exchange of gazes between Mother and Son, to feel myself somehow included in this ineffable exchange, is a kind of “beatific pre-vision” for me, which fills my soul with consolation and revives all my inner hopes. What joy, what support, what spiritual sustenance I receive there, in those long conversations with my Mother!

### *An unforgettable encounter*

The first time I visited the miraculous fresco was in November 1978, during a stay in Rome. The European autumn was well advanced and, accustomed to the mildness of this season in Brazil, I did not yet know its rigours. I did not even know the way to the charming little town of Genazzano, so I asked a friend from the Eternal City to accompany me.

We took a bus from *Stazione Termini*, stopping at all the picturesque medieval towns along the way, until finally reaching Genazzano. Directly after lunch, we entered the sanctuary.

Upon seeing the fresco, I felt great joy. Our Lady received me very maternally, and completely enraptured my soul, confirming my yearnings regarding her victory over the Revolution. I availed myself of the chance to take several photographs,

and extended, as much as possible, those blessed moments in her company. At a certain moment, however, when the sun had already set, a priest began to jingle his keys, letting us know that it was time to close the church.

This first contact marked the starting point of a relationship with the Mother of Good Counsel, replete with intimacy and affection, with confidences and guidance as to which paths to follow. On the return trip, I was shivering with cold, as I had failed to bring my coat and the bus windows were open. Nevertheless, inundated with consolation, I remained absorbed in my reflections on the physiognomy of the image, its attractiveness and its colours.

The benefits of this brief encounter with *Mater Boni Consilii* were immense, and led me to make a resolution: insofar as my apostolic duties permitted, I would not allow a long while to pass before returning to Genazzano, for I would no longer be able to live far from the heavenly company of the Mother and Child of the blessed fresco. And, in the decades that followed, Our Lady would, in fact, give me numerous opportunities to visit her.

***“Hold me tightly in thy maternal arms!”***

I could narrate countless other episodes; but how to fit within a few brief lines, a relationship that began in 1978 and has extended over more than four decades, to the present day?<sup>3</sup>

Our Lady constantly invites me to live in abandonment to her care, to her solicitude and to her refuge, enveloping me in the same love in which She enfolds her Divine Son.

In fact, every time I pray before the fresco of *Mater Boni Consilii*, or even



*Magazine archive*



João S. Clá Dias

**“To be before the sacred fresco, to allow myself to be pervaded by this exchange of gazes between Mother and Son, to feel myself somehow included in this ineffable exchange, is a kind of ‘beatific pre-vision’ for me”**

The fresco of the Mother of Good Counsel, photographed in November of 1978 by Msgr. João, who is shown in inset, on the same occasion. On the previous page, the founder of the Heralds in the Shrine of Genazzano, in March of 2005



Magazine archive

**A son is one who fully understands his mother, and knows how to discern her attitudes of soul through simple gestures or looks**

Holy Mass celebrated by Msgr. João before the miraculous fresco, in February of 2006

a replica, I feel my soul, so to speak, anointed with a balm that brings me new strength for my fight, new courage for each day and new graces for my life. The Lady of Good Counsel is, for me, a smile from Providence, a beacon amid the storms, a shining star in the dark nights!

There is something mysterious in the picture, making the interaction with Our Lady so sublime and elevated that it excludes any form of human or even angelic communication. She speaks directly to our hearts. How? By conversing with us through her gaze. The good counsel She brings us is imprinted in her gaze, which manifests itself now affectionate and maternal, now serious and grave, now inexorable and just... We could spend days and days, even whole eternities, commenting on this gaze, for who could encompass the vastness of the gaze of Mary Most Holy? No one... or rather, solely the Child She holds in her arms.

Nevertheless, before the holy fresco, no one can remain excluded from the

scene, as a mere spectator. No! With *Mater Boni Consilii*, there is only one position to take: to unite oneself to that Child and let oneself be carried by Our Lady. That is, to make oneself a son!

A son is one who fully understands his mother, and knows how to discern her attitudes of soul through simple gestures or looks. But when there is a perfect correspondence of love between mother and child, there arises an even more sublime relationship: they come to share one single heart. Thus, if asked to represent the hearts of the celestial Personages of the fresco, the Author would place just one, rather than two hearts... That is what it is to be her child, and that is the degree of union with Our Lady to which each of us is called.

But that is not all. No one can be a true child of Our Lady without his soul having reached the pinnacles of confidence... What pinnacles are these? Let us behold the image once again, and there we will find the answer: these pinnacles are the maternal arms of Mary! Whoever does not have the

confidence to approach her, and throw himself into her arms, cannot be called her child.

Therefore, in closing this succinct account of my relationship with the Mother of Good Counsel of Genazzano, I turn to her, in spirit, to beg her: "My Mother, think of me, and hold me tightly in thy maternal arms, for only in them will I learn the marvels of thy love!" ❖

Taken, with adaptations, from:  
*Mary Most Holy: The Paradise of God Revealed to Men.*  
Houston: Heralds of the Gospel,  
2020, v.I, p.98-151

<sup>1</sup> Cf. DILLON, George Francis. *The Virgin Mother of Good Counsel*. London: Granville Mansions, 1884, p.93-102.

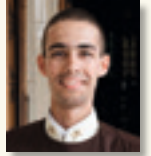
<sup>2</sup> CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Mãe do Bom Conselho*. 3.ed. São Paulo: Lumen Sapientiæ, 2016, p.26-29.

<sup>3</sup> Msgr. João died in 2024, and he wrote these lines in 2019.

Mother of Good Counsel of Genazzano

# A Wonderful Counsellor

The small fresco of “Mater Boni Consilii” is made great by its history: a mysterious origin, extraordinary miracles, prodigious victories... and a conjecture regarding the future.



✦ Artur Pereira

**W**e are in Genazzano. Located on a hill in Lazio, the town enchants us with its medieval architecture, winding alleys, and houses that over the years – to the amazement of engineers – continue to be built up with rooms and floors. Every corner seems to have been artistically planned: here an alleyway that becomes the staircase of a house, there an “avenue” where three friends stop to chat, causing heavy traffic...

But for Europe, what is Genazzano? What is Genazzano compared to Venice, a city where the sky kisses the waters? What is Genazzano compared to Paris, where such wonders as Notre-Dame and Sainte Chapelle compete in beauty? A simple village, like many others.

However, it was to this unknown corner that Pope Leo XIV wanted to make his first visit as Pontiff. What drew him there? A simple fresco of the Blessed Virgin, already marked by time and located in a side chapel of a certain shrine.

Now, what is so special about this painting?

## *In Scutari, the first battles*

The first reports of this devotion come from Scutari, a small town in the Albanian hills.<sup>1</sup> An ancient tradition tells that in the mid-13th century, a fresco of Our Lady, with fine, maternal features, mysteriously appeared there, brought from the East by angelic hands at the same time that the Holy House of Nazareth was transferred to Loreto.

A sanctuary was built on the site, which quickly became the largest pilgrimage centre in the country. Numerous Albanians went daily to the feet of their Patroness<sup>2</sup> – Our Lady of Scutari or of the Annunciation, as she was called – to beseech or to give thanks for favours. However, when the city was taken by the Turks of Sultan Murad II in 1423, a new prayer was added to the pilgrims’ requests: liberation from the yoke that oppressed them.

Our Lady wished to test the perseverance of her children for two decades, until, in 1443, she raised up a liberator for the nation: George Castriota, known as Scanderbeg,<sup>3</sup> an Albanian prince kidnapped in the 1423 attack and forcibly

made a Janissary,<sup>4</sup> who took advantage of the planned invasion of Hungary to return, with three hundred other Catholics – also involuntary Janissaries – to the Christian ranks.

Fighting under the banner of the cross, he quickly reconquered the territory that belonged to him by inheritance, and Albania, free from Turkish oppression, was able on November 13, 1443, to hear the church bells break their long silence. Twenty-four years of arduous victories followed until, in January 1467, after having fought for the last time on this earth against the enemies of Christ, Scanderbeg, sword and shield of Christendom,<sup>5</sup> slept the repose of the just.

## *A long journey*

Shortly after the death of the valiant prince, the Faith entered a period of decline. Customs deteriorated; schism spread throughout Albania, including in Scutari, where flowers no longer adorned the altar of the Patroness, nor did the faithful pray at her feet as before. Moreover, the threat of a new

**Genazzano, a simple village situated on a hill in Lazio, is the home of a small fresco of the Most Holy Virgin, with a history that is lost in the mists of time**

A view of Genazzano (Italy)

Turkish domination hung over the people.

In this context, De Sclavis and Georgio, two soldiers of Scanderbeg, found themselves facing a terrible dilemma: flee the country and abandon their Patroness or fall into Muslim hands. Tormented by this doubt, they rushed to the holy image and asked for a solution.

That same night, while sleeping, Georgio dreamed of the Mother of God: She ordered him to prepare to accompany her on a long journey. Awakening the next day, he hurried to tell his companion what had happened, receiving a similar account from him.

Filled with unspeakable joy, they both went to the sanctuary to thank their Lady, and behold, while they were praying, the fresco gently detached itself from the wall and, enveloped in a white and luminous cloud, began to move out of the church. The soldiers accompanied it for thirty kilometres to the shores of the Adriatic. As the image continued its journey by sea, they realized, astonished, that the water remained solid beneath their feet. Thus, they travelled – it is not known in how much time – the more than five hundred kilometres that separate Scutari from Rome, without suffering from thirst, hunger, heat, cold, or fatigue.

Arriving at the gates of the Eternal City, the fresco disappeared from sight, leaving the two foreigners distressed, thinking it was a punishment for some fault. But they would later reencounter the image in a small village near Rome.

### *In Genazzano, the Queen's throne is being prepared*

Meanwhile, in the small town of Genazzano, separated from Rome by just under fifty kilometres, lived Petruccia Nocera, a widow and Augustinian tertiary very devoted to Our Lady of Good Counsel.<sup>6</sup> Distressed by the desolate state in which Christendom found itself – Europe softened by Humanism,



Gustavo Krahl

### **The miraculous fresco of Scutari abandoned Albania and chose Genazzano as a new fiefdom**

The arrival of the fresco in the town - Shrine of the Mother of Good Counsel, Genazzano (Italy)

the flame of the crusading ideal extinguished by sensuality in the souls of Catholic princes and corrupted morals – she constantly pleaded with Heaven for divine intervention.

One day, she received a magnificent revelation: the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the miraculous fresco of Scutari, would abandon Albania and choose Genazzano as her new fiefdom. As for Petruccia, she should rebuild the ancient temple dedicated to the invocation of Our Lady of Good Counsel to house the holy image. The devout widow quickly set to work. She employed the few means she possessed, even giving up her own house to fulfil the heavenly commission.

However, when the walls of the Chapel of St. Blaise, the first to be rebuilt, reached only one metre in height, the money ran out and the works were interrupted. Petruccia, already eighty years old, soon became the target of scorn and mockery from the other villagers, who ironically applied to her

the passage from Scripture: “This man began to build, and was not able to finish” (Lk 14:30). But the Comforter of the Afflicted would not delay in helping her faithful servant.

### *An unexpected visit*

On April 25, 1467, Genazzano was celebrating. A municipal fair had been organized there to commemorate the town's patron saint, St. Mark. The liveliness typical of the Italian people painted such a rich scene that it would be difficult for an artist to accurately depict it without missing several of its aspects...

However, amidst the popular music, the lively conversations, the bustle of children playing, and the voices of vendors crying out, an unexpected sight filled the people with astonishment. Everything went silent, and a luminous cloud slowly descended upon one of the unfinished walls of the small Chapel of St. Blaise.

To add to the general surprise, the bells of all the churches in Genazzano



miraculously began to ring. The population quickly crowded into the chapel and, as the rays of light began to diminish in intensity, they were able to contemplate a beautiful fresco of the Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus in her arms. During that night, the crowd remained there, on their knees, in tributes of love and gratitude.

The news soon spread, and numerous pilgrims from all parts began to visit the holy fresco, asking for graces, giving thanks for favours received, and leaving donations for the renovation of the church, which was soon resumed and completed. Such was the flow of miracles worked through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin that, in the first 110 days alone, 167 were recorded, some of which deserve special attention.

### *The dead rise*

Antonietto of Castelnuovo had a faithful servant, Constantine of Carolis, whom he greatly esteemed. Constantine was struck by a serious illness and, after receiving the Sacraments, gave his soul to God.

His master, shaken by the loss of such an esteemed servant, prostrated himself beside the corpse and promised that, if Our Lady restored him to life, he would take him to the altar of Genazzano to thank her. A bold prayer, no doubt, but one that the Virgin received with pleasure. To the astonishment of all those present, the servant opened his eyes and sat up, asking for something to eat.

Upon being informed of the promise made by his master to the Mother of God, the resurrected man set out together with him, to give thanks at the foot of the sacred fresco for such a wondrous miracle.

### *The demons flee*

However, more than for the health of the body, the Blessed Virgin Mary watches over the health of her children's souls. In this vein, there are numerous

accounts of miraculous cures of one of the most terrible spiritual illnesses: demonic possession.

One such case involved Niccola Greco, who, after drinking a bewitched liqueur, was possessed by a demon that made him delirious with rage, sometimes causing him to run around with a drawn sword.

His parents, disconcerted, heard accounts of some miracles performed by the image of Genazzano and decided to take their poor possessed son there. As soon as the young man was brought into the chapel, the evil spirit left him and he recovered the health and peace he had lost so long ago.

### *Unbelievers regain their faith*

There was also another terrible spiritual illness, this time a culpable one, which found a miraculous cure before Our Lady of Good Counsel: unbelief.

For the impious Antonio Cerroni, a resident of Pisciano, the marvellous prodigies performed by the holy fresco were nothing more than a ridiculous fantasy forged by religious people. Accordingly, he laughed and mocked the new devotion that, as time passed, was spreading more and more.

One day, he had to travel to Genazzano to settle some business. Moved by curiosity, he decided to visit the church where the supposed miracles took place. However, this was not possible for him because, as soon as he crossed the threshold of the sanctuary, he fell to the ground with his limbs paralyzed.

Recognizing that this turn of events was a punishment for his blatant impiety, he tearfully pleaded for mercy, publicly confessing his sin.

Upon finishing his supplication, he regained the use of his limbs and was able to make his way to the chapel, where he presented himself before the One who had just restored to him his mobility of body and, above all, granted him the priceless gift of faith.

## *Mother and Protectress of Christendom*

If Our Lady of Good Counsel has always been solicitous in assisting each of her devotees in particular, she has dedicated no less attention to the Holy Church as a whole.

In the mid-16th century, by the mercy of God, a Saint was elevated to the Throne of Peter: St. Pius V, an ardent devotee of the Mother of Good Counsel. "Zealous for the Lord" (1 Kgs 19:10), he perceived the urgent need to unite the Catholic nations in an attack against Islam, which was then threatening Christendom both by land and by sea. Nevertheless, most Catholic monarchs, too absorbed with their own temporal interests, did not share the same conviction.

Faced with this difficulty, the Supreme Pontiff resolved to turn to his incomparable Counsellor. After many prayers and countless efforts, he managed to unite Spain, Venice, Genoa and, of course, the Papal States, under the command of the young Don Juan of Austria and his lieutenant, Marco Antonio Colonna, prince of Genazzano and great devotee of *Mater Boni Consilii*.

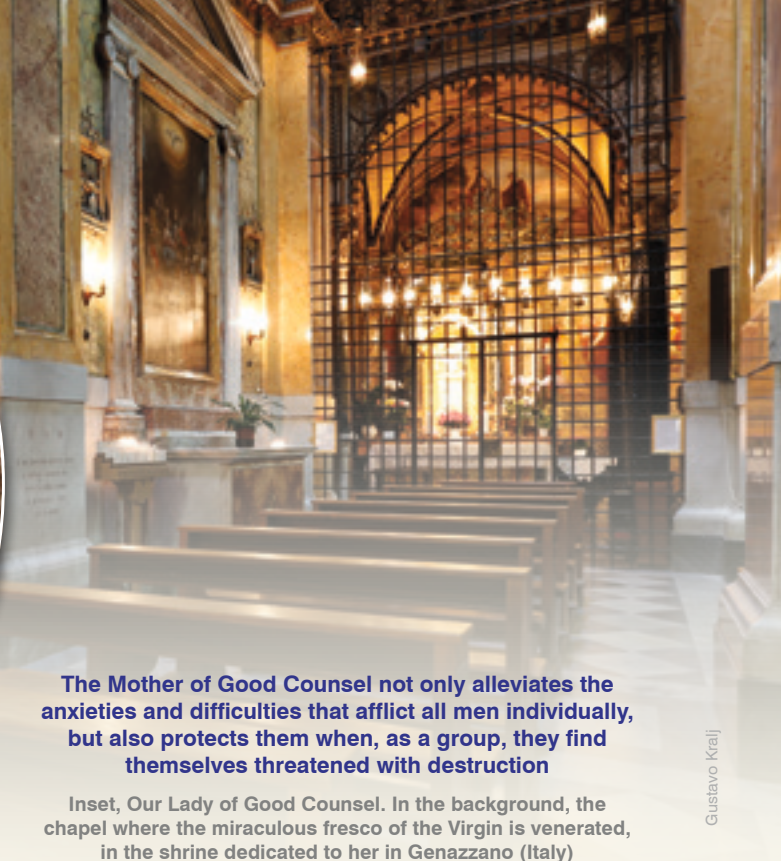
Under the devotion of the Holy Rosary, the Catholics achieved victory in the famous Battle of Lepanto, on October 7, 1571, thus preventing Europe and, consequently, the newly discovered America, from falling under Muslim rule. As an expression of gratitude for the aid received, Marco Antonio and other local combatants brought their war trophies and deposited them in the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Counsel. These ornaments of war remained there until the French Revolution.

### *The Siege of Vienna*

Defeated at sea, the Turks continued to advance by land. Once again, the greatest challenge for the Christians was to gather fighters to confront Ottoman power. It was then that, on



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Gustavo Kralj

**The Mother of Good Counsel not only alleviates the anxieties and difficulties that afflict all men individually, but also protects them when, as a group, they find themselves threatened with destruction**

Inset, Our Lady of Good Counsel. In the background, the chapel where the miraculous fresco of the Virgin is venerated, in the shrine dedicated to her in Genazzano (Italy)

November 17 of 1682, Blessed Innocent XI decided to crown the brow of Our Lady of Good Counsel with gold and precious stones, imploring Heaven for Catholics to unite in order to fight the enemies of Christendom.

Less than a year later, Leopold I, Emperor of Austria, and John Sobieski, King of Poland, joined forces and, on September 12, 1683, they fought against the Muslims who were besieging Vienna, achieving another miraculous victory, also under the protection of Our Lady of Good Counsel, a copy of whose image was venerated in one of the churches of the imperial capital.

Regarding these two great events in the History of the Church, Msgr. João comments:

“Lepanto and Vienna. These are two of the most significant battles in which the future of Christendom was at stake. In both Lepanto and Vienna, the heavenly protection of Our Lady of Good Counsel was felt. This is indeed one of the characteristics of the interventions performed by the holy image of Genazzano: She not only dispels the anxieties and removes the difficulties that afflict all men individually, but also protects them when, as a group, they find themselves threatened with destruction. To these two historical examples, the stanza from the hymn of the Marian Congregations can well be applied: ‘He who fights in the shadow of the Immaculate does not fear the sword of a thousand soldiers.’”<sup>7</sup>

### ***Does history repeat itself?***

Analysing briefly the history of *Mater Boni Consilii*, we notice a constant that manifests itself from the heroic conquests of Scanderbeg to the miraculous victories at Lepanto and Vienna: a world weakened by a spiritual crisis and threatened by enemies; a handful – or sometimes a single soul – who, by remaining faithful and imploring help, becomes invincible; a miraculous intervention which crowns the perseverance of the good.

All this comes to mind when we see Pope Leo XIV, happily reigning, praying at the foot of the fresco moments after his election. A question then arises in our minds: does history repeat itself? ✦

<sup>1</sup> The historical details in the article were taken from the work: CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Mãe do Bom Conselho*. 3.ed. São Paulo: Lumen Sapientiae, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Although the official proclamation was only made in 1895, the oldest traditions show that

the Albanians, since the miraculous apparition, already considered Our Lady of Good Counsel their Patroness (cf. CLÁ DIAS, op. cit., p.83).

<sup>3</sup> For his bravery, he was given the nickname Alexander, and as a prince, he was called “Alexander the Prince”,

*Iskander Bey* in Turkish, and rendered Scanderbeg by the Albanians.

<sup>4</sup> An elite Islamic corps, made up of Christians who had been coerced to become Muslims in childhood or youth.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. PASTOR, Ludwig von. *Historia de los Papas. Desde*

*finis de la Edad Media*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1910, v.IV/2, p.84.

<sup>6</sup> Since the 4th century, a marble bas-relief in honour of Our Lady of Good Counsel was venerated in Genazzano.

<sup>7</sup> CLÁ DIAS, op. cit., p.213.

# “Do you need a counsel?”

Deep in our souls, Mary seems to say: “My son, my daughter, confide! Confide in me and I will guide you on the right path!”



✦ Sr. Patricia Victoria Villegas

Countless times we heard our beloved founder comment on the parable of the prodigal son, analysing the characters that make up the scenario divinely idealized by Our Lord Jesus Christ: the father, the older brother, the prodigal son himself in his various states of soul.

However, we were surprised one day to hear him comment on a fourth figure, absent from the parable, but probably contemplated by the Saviour: the mother of the two young men.<sup>1</sup>

What would have been the attitude of this mother upon seeing her younger son leave his father’s house and venture into the world? First of all, she would not let him leave... And if by chance the son managed to escape from home, the mother, saddened by his departure, would not be content to wait resignedly for his return, but would search for him tirelessly until bringing him back.

This beautiful reflection helps us to understand the historical era in which we live. Indeed, humanity in our days is a “prodigal daughter” of God, upon whom a great forgiveness must descend. However, she is unable return to her father’s house on her own and needs a merciful mother to rescue her. Where can she find such a kind and gentle mother? A sure answer may lie in the sublime fresco of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Let us carefully examine some aspects of this fresco and see how it

encapsulates, in every detail, a maternal smile.

## *Counsel of Mary, counsel of Christ*

The first detail that deserves attention is the title given to the Blessed Virgin, invoked in the painting as She who can give us *good counsel*.

Now, how do we define the term *counsel*? In a general sense, it is a recommendation aimed at solving a particular problem. Therefore, in difficult circumstances that call for serious decisions, nothing can be more valuable than receiving good counsel! From this point of view, there could be no one more trustworthy than Our Lady to advise us in any circumstance; She is, after all, the Mother of the Incarnate Wisdom!

When contemplating the Genazano fresco, one peculiarity often goes unnoticed: the Virgin’s gaze is not fixed directly on the faithful who come before her, as is usually the case in most images of Our Lady, but her head inclines slightly towards the Child, indicating to us that Jesus is the source of all the wisdom from which She draws to counsel us. For this reason, the Divine Infant, despite being small, is represented with a physiognomy of one who has already reached maturity.<sup>2</sup>

In this exchange of gazes between Mother and Son, moreover, the union of wills between them is manifested, in such a way that Mary transmits to us what Jesus desires, guiding us along the

paths that the divine will has designed for our lives. Therefore, her counsel enjoys the precision and infallibility of the very words of her Divine Child.

On the other hand, the filial gesture of the Infant in embracing His Blessed Mother gives us the example of the intimacy with which we should turn to Mary, who is also our Mother, and of the disposition of soul necessary to receive her counsel. According to Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira,<sup>3</sup> when the Child Jesus grasps Our Lady’s neck with His little fingers, He not only wants to hold on, but also to turn her face towards Himself, as if saying: “Mother, look at Me!” It is the perfect prayer of a good son!

## *An unparalleled gaze*

In her earthly life, Our Lady possessed, to an eminent degree, the gift of transmitting to those who approached her the virtues overflowing from her soul.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it is characteristic of perfect virtue not to be practised only individually, but to be “contagious” to other souls.

We can imagine, for example, when She met Mary Magdalene, still a sinner, and they made eye contact for the first time. What must have transpired within that poor soul at such an august moment? These are mysteries of grace... However, we are free to imagine that the purity of Our Lady, like a pure white mantle, covered her hardened heart and, from the mire of

her debauchery, the lily of virginity began to sprout, which would soon be restored to her!

A similar wonder continues to be worked through her fresco. How many times do souls despair in the face of their miseries and failings, and no longer know where to turn to be able to abandon a vice... They lack the strength to confess their errors and receive God's forgiveness. What can they do? Simply, turn to the Mother of Good Counsel.

She does not always utter words, but She nevertheless speaks clearly through the motion of divine grace, more precious than all discourses! Looking intently at the fresco is sufficient for lost innocence to begin to be restored. Then, Our Lady strengthens the soul so that it may seek a priest and receive, in the Sacrament of Confession, the consummation of the work of mercy begun by her most pure gaze.

### **Communication that transcends words**

While Mary's gentle eyes, with their slightly oriental shape so beautifully represented in the fresco, further accentuate her maternal quality and affection, her lips, marked by a discreet smile, reveal the habitual seriousness of one whose soul is at peace, always ready for an encounter with God. "In everything Mary was grave and circumspect, never laughing, speaking little, saying only what was necessary, listening easily, always affable with everyone,"<sup>5</sup> narrates an ancient depiction of the Blessed Virgin.

Certainly, when walking along the roads of Nazareth, Mary would have cordially greeted her neighbours and acquaintances, along with any fortunate visitors to the region. Later, She also favoured the Apostles with countless words and counsels accompanied by a smile. And all this, which was not recorded in the Gospels, is transmitted to us by the fresco of Genazzano in its ineffable "changes of physiognomy."



Magazine archive

### **Our Lady of Good Counsel acts in this way: through the imponderables of her face, she gradually penetrates our soul with a soothing balm**

Msgr. João and his spiritual sons on a visit to the sacred fresco in March of 2006

Our Lady of Good Counsel acts in this way: through the imponderables of her face, she gradually penetrates our soul with a soothing balm, until working a mysterious conversion. She seems to be alive before our eyes, and her soft, serene, and maternal voice whispers in the depths of our hearts that sublime recommendation, always suited to human need, which indicates an infallible path: "Confidence!"

### **Our Lady will restore humanity!**

"What happened to me?" asked Joris-Karl Huysmans, the renowned French writer, when he found himself converted to the Catholic Faith by a mysterious grace. How was it possible that his soul, sunken as it was in the abyss of vice and sin, desired to change and tread the path of penance and holiness? Finding no answer in the world to this question, he acknowledged: "It is the Virgin who acts upon us in these cases; it is She who moulds us and places us in the hands of her Son, but her fingers are so delicate, so fluid and gentle that the soul, which they have grasped, feels nothing."<sup>6</sup>

Just as happened with Huysmans, and happens within each of us, Our Lady will one day intervene in history, restoring to humanity the life of grace and pouring out upon all creation the fullness of the effects of Redemption. Whatever happens, let us look to the fresco of Our Lady of Good Counsel, who will say to us:

"My son, my daughter, confide! And I will guide you on the right path!" ❖

<sup>1</sup> Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Homily*. Mairiporã, 18/3/2007.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conversation*. São Paulo, 22/8/1988.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 8/10/1971.

<sup>4</sup> In this sense, St. Thomas Aquinas affirms that the Blessed Virgin surpassed the Angels in purity, for She not only was pure, but attained purity for others (cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *In salutationem angelicam expositio*, n.1120).

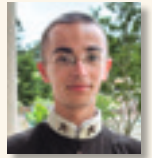
<sup>5</sup> LE MULIER, Henri. *Vie de la Très-Sainte Vierge*. Paris: Abel Pilon, 1859, t.I, p.372.

<sup>6</sup> HUYSMANS, Joris-Karl. *A caminho*. Povoá de Varzim: Povoense, 1902, p.35.



# The Gift of “Adventure”

A person acting under the influence of the gift of counsel instantly and infallibly judges the best course of action. Often, however, the chosen method deviates from human standards, because the gifts operate in a divine way.



✦ João Domingos Rodrigues

**S**aladin, one of the most powerful leaders of the 12th century, leaves Egypt for Jerusalem, at the head of twenty-six thousand elite knights. The Holy City has as its only help a leper king of only sixteen years old, Baldwin IV, who summons all the forces of the kingdom: no more than four hundred knights, most of them second-rate... From the top of Mount Gisard, the young sovereign contemplates the invading horde and realizes that, for every soldier of his, there are seventy Egyptians. He takes the initiative. He attacks!

Impulsiveness?

\* \* \*

Joan of Arc, the maiden who commands all the armies of France in the Hundred Years' War, is tried for alleged revelations and supposed miracles. The judges accuse her of witchcraft and test her with a question that almost induces a compromising answer: “Are you in the state of grace?” If she denies it, her wonders could not be the work of God; if she affirms it, she would confess to being proud, unworthy of receiving Heaven’s support. Joan, however, gives an immediate reply that would become a touchstone for Moral Theology regarding personal awareness of the state of grace.

Rashness?

\* \* \*

A group of monks board a boat, led by St. Brendan the Navigator. The Irish

mists of the 6th century envelop them. On this fragile vessel, they launch themselves into the unpredictability of the ocean, without a map, without a compass, without any instruments other than continuous psalmody, the crucifix, and the desire to evangelize the lands west of the Atlantic. However, they do not even know if these lands really exist...

Imprudence?

\* \* \*

Neither impulsiveness, nor rashness, nor imprudence. The truth is, dear reader, that these are three strokes of prudence, and in its most perfect and audacious form, which is the gift of counsel. Yes, because this gift consists not so much in giving good advice, but in being impelled by irresistible promptings of the Holy Spirit.

### The seven gifts

There are seven gifts of the Paraclete: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of God. These divine favours are defined as “supernatural operative habits infused by God into the powers of the soul, in order to receive and follow with ease the motions of the Holy Spirit in a divine or supernatural way.”<sup>1</sup>

This is a lot of information... Let us analyse it in parts, highlighting the most relevant expressions.

They are *operative habits*, that is, qualities that dispose the soul to follow

the motions of the Holy Spirit *with ease*, readiness and delight, as something entirely natural.

But what distinguishes gifts from virtues, since both are good operative habits? The main difference lies in their *modus operandi*: virtues are exercised *in a human way*, with man as the driving force and reason enlightened by faith as the rule; the gifts, on the other hand, are put into practice in *a divine or supernatural way*, with the Holy Spirit as the driving force and norm. Gifts are, therefore, a perfection of virtues.

Faith, as a supernatural virtue, enables us to believe in the Trinity. But the gift of knowledge, which perfects faith, led St. Augustine, for example, to see images of the Trinity in creatures; it is a super-excellence of faith! Under the influence of the virtues, we act discursively; under the gifts, by supernatural instinct.<sup>2</sup>

### The gift of counsel

Each gift of the Paraclete is closely linked to one of the seven principal virtues: the three theological virtues – faith, hope, and charity – and the four cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

The gift of counsel, which we are discussing here, is linked to the virtue of prudence. According to Aristotle’s definition, taken up by St. Thomas Aquinas, this is “right reason applied



to action,”<sup>3</sup> that is, the virtue that leads us to *choose the appropriate means to achieve an end*. Through it, we judge whether a specific act is lawful or not, whether it is fitting, useful, measured...

The doctor who decides to use a scalpel is prudent, as is the nurse who decides on a drug treatment, provided that these means are in conformity with the cure of the patient. In the supernatural realm, the man who breaks off a friendship that leads him to sin performs an act of prudence as beautiful as the priest who treats the repentant sinner with gentleness. Everything boils down – we repeat – to paving the way towards the right purpose, by lawful and appropriate means.

This virtue, which rises above nature when the end is supernatural – such as the glory of God and the good of souls – is the one with the most human demeanour. When, however, it is united with the gift of counsel, it takes on surprising airs, almost to the point of apparent recklessness: it ceases to be practised in a human way and is instead exercised in a divine way.

Those who, being in the state of grace, finds themselves under the influence of this gift “judge rightly, in particular cases, what is appropriate to do in order to achieve the supernatural end,”<sup>4</sup> instantaneously and infallibly. That is, in the face of the greatest unforeseen events and the most complex dilemmas, they are guided by an inexplicable certainty.

In intricate circumstances, how to reconcile gentleness with firmness? How to keep a secret without failing to tell the truth? How to combine the interior life with the apostolate, or affectionate tenderness with the most refined chastity? Through the gift of counsel.

It was guided by this gift that the three protagonists of the episodes narrated in our introduction acted. Baldwin IV dispersed Saladin’s twenty-six thousand men with his four hundred knights, of whom he lost only five. St. Joan of Arc, illiterate, answered the cunning question like a scholar: “If I am in a state of grace, I ask God to preserve me; if not, I ask Him to grant it to me.” The Irish monks reached Iceland, Greenland, and possibly America.

This gift of the Paraclete is, in effect, the gift granted for holy “adventures” and which leads the faithful to ever greater “Christian daring.”<sup>5</sup>

***The Patroness of Good Counsel***

Never in history have Catholics experienced such “adventures” as today: at every turn, unexpected dangers, malevolent suggestions, persecutions, and the snares of the devil and his henchmen surprise us. Never, therefore, have we needed the intercession of the Mother of Good Counsel so much.

How can we not suppose that She is the Patroness of great and holy “adventures”? She, who guided the two Albanian soldiers across the waters of the Adriatic Sea,<sup>6</sup> will also lead us, through the gift of counsel from her Divine Spouse, to triumph over all difficulties. Following Our Lady of Good Counsel, the Barque of Peter will cross any ocean unscathed. ✠

**The gift of counsel is given by the Paraclete to lead to faithful to ever greater levels of “Christian daring”**

From top to bottom: Baldwin IV of Jerusalem in the Battle of Montgisard, by Charles-Philippe Larivière - Palace of Versailles (France); interrogation of St. Joan of Arc, by Paul Delaroché - Museum of Fine Arts, Rouen (France); voyage of St. Brendan - University Library of Heidelberg (Germany)



Photos: Reproduction

<sup>1</sup> ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *Somos hijos de Dios*. Madrid: BAC, 1977, p.37.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, II-II, q.47, a.2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.68, a.1, ad 4.

<sup>4</sup> ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *Teología de la perfección cristiana*. 6.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1988, p.547.

<sup>5</sup> CAMÕES, Luís Vaz de. Os Lusíadas. Canto VII, 14. In: *Obras Completas*. Porto: Imprensa Portuguesa, 1874, t.III, p.239.

<sup>6</sup> See the article *A Wonderful Counsellor*, in this issue.

# Mother and Counsellor of the Popes

Although little known in our days, the invocation of Our Lady of Good Counsel was honoured by numerous Pontiffs and played a decisive role in the course of several historical events.



✦ Gabriela Cifuentes

**M**ay 10, 2025. In front of the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Genazzano, Italy, a multitude of the faithful crowded together to witness, filled with emotion, the arrival of the newly elected Pontiff Leo XIV, who wished to visit the miraculous fresco of Mary. “I wanted so much to come here in these first days of the new Ministry of carrying out the mission of Successor of Peter that the Church has entrusted to me,”<sup>1</sup> he affirmed to those present, after the period spent in prayer and recollection before the sacred image.

With this consecration of his pontificate from its beginning, the Holy Father showed the world his special devotion to Mary under the title of Mother of Good Counsel. This invocation became very dear to the Order of St. Augustine from the 15th century onwards, when “Our Lady, who was in Scutari, Albania, came from that distant country to Genazzano [...]; and of her own free will, She gave herself and entrusted herself in her holy image to the hands of the Augustinians.”<sup>2</sup> However, we can conjecture that, in addition to this noble motive, another reason may have drawn the

Holy Father to the feet of the Virgin of Genazzano.

As the one who counsels and guides souls in fulfilling God’s will, *Mater Boni Consilii* is thus the perfect patroness of the guides of the Barque of Peter amid the storms of the world. Who is more in need of protection, help, and direction than the visible Head of the Church? Who is more interested in obtaining from God the light of wisdom?

One of the proofs of this reality is that such devotion, although little known in our days, was highly valued by numerous Pontiffs throughout history and has, on several occasions, played a decisive role in the course of Christendom.

### *First honours for the invocation*

After Pope Paul II (1464-1471) examined the facts concerning the miraculous arrival of the fresco in Genazzano in 1467, and granted the official approval of the Holy See for this devotion, *Mater Boni Consilii* began to act in the heart of the Church. It is known, for example, that Sixtus IV (1471-1484) had a great devotion to her.

At the end of the 15th century, Alexander VI (1492-1503) granted special

indulgences to the souls in Purgatory for each Eucharist celebrated in the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Counsel. Later, Gregory XIII (1572-1585) further determined that the altar of her shrine should become a *privileged altar*<sup>3</sup> for Masses every day of the year and for all the clergy.

### *New papal privileges*

The pontificates of St. Pius V (1566-1572) and Innocent XI (1676-1689), during which the Ottoman threat clouded the horizons of Christendom and the Church, would be marked by the protection of the Queen of Good Counsel, as seen in a previous article.<sup>4</sup>

The Christian victory at the Battle of Lepanto and the Siege of Vienna would forever shine in the firmament of history as a symbol of the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her children. Solemnly crowned by order of the Holy Father on November 17, 1682 – a gesture with which her intercession was implored for the union and mobilization of Catholic sovereigns against the infidels – the Virgin of Genazzano would not forsake those who placed themselves under her maternal dominion.



After such portentous manifestations on the part of the sacred fresco, it was to be expected that the Holy Church would honour her invocation even more.

Firstly, Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) saw fit to offer Our Lady of Good Counsel one of the most eminent privileges that can be granted to a devotion: in 1777 the Pontiff granted the Augustinians of Genazzano a proper office for the celebration of the date of the fresco's arrival at the sanctuary, to be recited there on April 25, and by the entire Order on April 26.<sup>5</sup> Thus was instituted the first commemoration of Our Lady of Good Counsel, a source of even more numerous graces, valuable counsels and infallible help for all Marian devotees.

Benedict XIV (1740-1758), another faithful devotee of the *Madonna del Buon Consiglio*, also granted papal approval to a notable association called the Pious Union of Our Lady of Good Counsel. It was a spiritual league of devotees registered in the sanctuary's register, whose goal was to honour the invocation every day with some act of homage, promote devotion to her throughout the world, and diligently observe the inspirations granted by the fresco in order to avoid sin and please God. Upon approving the association,

the Pontiff himself wished to be enrolled in it as its first member.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to Benedict XIV, several other Popes joined the pious union, among them Blessed Pius IX (1846-1878) and Leo XIII (1878-1903).

The latter, wishing to further honour his heavenly Protector, on March 17, 1903, elevated the Shrine of Genazzano to the category of Minor Basilica; and, to encourage souls to love the Mother of Good Counsel, on April 22 of the same year, by a decree of the then Sacred Congregation of Rites, the invocation *Mater Boni Consilii* was included in the Litany of Loreto.<sup>7</sup>

***A gift from Our Lady to the Holy Church***

In 1903 Our Lady, certainly with more power to influence the Popes due to the new privileges with which She had been honoured, once again made felt the effectiveness of her discreet but infallible counsel in guiding the Barque of Peter, this time during the decisive period of the conclave that followed the death of Leo XIII.

After the first session in the Sistine Chapel, held on August 3 of that year, Cardinal Oreglia di Santo Stefano, Dean of the Sacred College, addressed the secretary of the conclave, Archbishop Rafael Merry del Val,

informing him that the number of votes for the election of the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto, was only increasing, but that the latter refused to accept this most grave onus. He then requested that he ask the Cardinal one last time if he persisted in his refusal, so that he might eventually direct the votes toward another candidate.

Archbishop Merry del Val then went to the Pauline Chapel, where he found Cardinal Sarto kneeling before the image of Our Lady of Good Counsel. As he approached him and conveyed the Dean's message, he noticed tears beginning to run down his face... and he continued to insist on refusing the position. Archbishop Merry del Val, however, by divine inspiration, reassured him: "*Eminenza, si faccia coraggio, il Signore l'aiuterà* – Your Eminence, have courage, the Lord will help you."

The Cardinal gazed at him intently, thanked him, and continued praying before Our Lady of Good Counsel.

A few hours later, he finally accepted the will of Providence and assumed the Chair of Peter. The Holy Church thus gained a most zealous shepherd, one of

Antoine Taveneaux (CC by-sa 3.0)



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**Praying before the image of Our Lady of Good Counsel in the Pauline Chapel, St. Pius X found the strength to accept the papacy**

On the left, the Pauline Chapel – Vatican Palace; above, St Pius X. On the previous page, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican, with the statue of the Fisherman

Saillko (CC by 3.0)



Vatican Media

**As the helper and counsellor of the Popes, Our Lady of Genazzano is more attentive than ever to the needs of the Church and watches over the Successor of Peter with boundless zeal**

Pope Leo XIV during his visit to Genazzano, on May 10, 2025

its bravest combatants in the turbulent 20th century: St. Pius X.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps in memory of and gratitude for the graces received during those hours of anguish spent in the Pauline Chapel, St. Pius X (1903-1914) kept an image of Our Lady of Good Counsel on his desk throughout his long and arduous pontificate.

### **The Papal devotion reaches our days**

More recently, Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) counselled devotion to the Virgin of Genazzano when, in one of

his first general audiences, on October 25, 1978, he explained the need for the virtue of prudence: “I the Pope, what must I do to act prudently? [...] He must pray and endeavour to have that gift of the Holy Spirit which is called the gift of counsel. And let all those who wish the new Pope to be a prudent Pastor of the Church, implore for him the gift of counsel. And for themselves, let them also ask for this gift through the special intercession of the Mother of Good Counsel.”<sup>9</sup>

In April 1993, the Pontiff visited the famous Shrine of Genazzano in order

to implore special graces for the apostolic journey he was about to undertake to Albania on the 25th of the same month.<sup>10</sup>

His successor, Benedict XVI (2005-2013), inaugurated a mosaic of Our Lady of Good Counsel in the Vatican gardens on July 11, 2009. Several authorities honoured the event with their presence, including the Pope’s Secretary, Msgr. Georg Gänswein, and the Prior of the Order of St. Augustine, Fr. Robert Francis Prevost – the future Pope Leo XIV.<sup>11</sup> Benedict XVI blessed the mosaic with the intention that many would pray there and offer praise to the miraculous invocation.

### **Mary will guide the course of history through the Popes**

Helper and counsellor of the Popes, Our Lady of Genazzano has always fulfilled her role as Mother of the Church to perfection throughout history, guiding it unharmed amidst the most varied difficulties and infernal attacks.

In these times, marked by crises of all kinds, it is most certain that She is more attentive than ever to the needs of the Mystical Body of Christ and watches over the Successor of Peter with immeasurable zeal.

To Leo XIV, under the ineffable protection of the Mother of Good Counsel, to whom he dedicates special devotion, is entrusted the guiding of the ship of the Church to the port of salvation, fearless in the face of storms, in imitation of his illustrious predecessors. ✠

<sup>1</sup> VATICAN NEWS. *Pope visits Marian sanctuary outside Rome*. In: [www.vaticannews.va](http://www.vaticannews.va).

<sup>2</sup> DE ORGIO, Angelo Maria apud CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Mãe do Bom Conselho*. 3.ed. São Paulo: Lumen Sapientiae, 2016, p.293.

<sup>3</sup> A plenary indulgence is granted for the deceased for whom the Holy Sacrifice is offered when

Mass is celebrated at a privileged altar, provided that he died in a state of grace.

<sup>4</sup> *A Wonderful Counsellor*, in this issue.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. DILLON, George F. *The Virgin Mother of Good Counsel*. Rome: Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fidei, 1884, p.421.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. CLÁ DIAS, op. cit., p.275.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. LEO XIII. *Ex quo Beatissima Virgo Maria*: ASS 35 (1902-1903), 627.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. MERRY DEL VAL, Rafael. *El Papa San Pio X: Memorias*. 2.ed. Madrid: Atenas, 1954, p.3-

<sup>9</sup> ST. JOHN PAUL II. *General Audience*, 25/10/1978.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. L’OSSERVATORE ROMANO. *Papi e santi pellegrini al santuario agostiniano*. In: [www.osservatoreromano.va](http://www.osservatoreromano.va).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. VALIANTE, Francesco M. *Nei Giardini Vaticani un mosaico della Madonna del Buon Consiglio*. In: [www.madredelbuonconsiglio.it](http://www.madredelbuonconsiglio.it).



# Alliance Between Counsel and Mercy

St. Thomas Aquinas establishes an interesting relationship between the gift of counsel and the fifth beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7). To better understand this connection, it is necessary, first of all, to recall the role of the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the evangelical beatitudes in the spiritual life of the baptized, as well as their meaning in theology.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are outstanding acts practised by a soul who faithfully responds to the promptings of the Paraclete through His gifts (cf. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.70, a.1). They can be compared to the ripe fruits of a tree and are distinguished by the great sweetness and gentleness that accompany them. In his Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul lists some of them: “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (5:22-23).

Now, when the fruits of the Holy Spirit are surpassing in their perfection and excellence, they are called the evangelical beatitudes (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.70, a.2). These constitute the culminating point, on earth, of the Christian life and are, as a result of the sublime rewards linked to them, already a beginning of eternal happiness. In a certain sense, they represent a synthesis of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Our Lord Jesus Christ reduces them to eight (cf. Mt 5:1-10).

This number, however, is symbolic, since all the heroic works of the saints are counted among the beatitudes. These are acts of perfect virtue – and therefore concrete actions – in this sense differentiating themselves from the virtues and gifts which, as

When discussing the relationship between the gift of counsel and the fifth beatitude, St. Thomas Aquinas relies on St. Augustine, who states: “Counsel is befitting the merciful, because the one remedy is to be delivered from evils so great, to pardon, and to give” (*Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.52, a.4). The Angelic Doctor offers some further considerations in this regard.

St. Thomas affirms that the gift of counsel directs all our virtuous acts, but it can be said that it does so in a special way when we perform a work of mercy, as the motive that inspires it (I-II, q.69, a.3, ad 3).

Indeed, the gift of counsel properly refers to what is most useful in view of our ultimate end, that is, it helps us to choose what leads us without deviation to Heaven. Now, nothing is more useful to us in attaining eternal life than mercy (cf. II-II, q.52, a.4), in the double sense enunciated by the fifth beatitude: through works of mercy towards our neighbour, we obtain divine mercy for ourselves.

Aquinas explains (cf. *Lectura super Mattheum*, c.5, lect.3) that being merciful means having a heart that suffers as one’s own the misfortune of others, leading us to help our neighbour in their temporal needs and, above all, to exhort them to abandon vice, the

worst of evils.

Whoever acts in this way obtains God’s mercy for themselves in this life, through the forgiveness of sins and temporal punishment, and especially in the life to come. ✚



Francisco Lecaros

**Nothing is more useful for reaching Heaven, the goal towards which the gift of counsel directs our acts, than mercy**

A Daughter of Charity distributes food to the needy, by Gabriel Puig Roda - Museum of Fine Arts, Castellón (Spain)

operative habits, dispose us to produce supernatural acts (cf. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.69, a.1). Thus, they correspond to the gifts as operation corresponds to habit (cf. *Super Sententiis*. L.III, dist.34, q.1, a.4, ad 1).



# *A Hundred and Fifty Years Ago, Dona Lucilia Was Born*

The details we have of Dona Lucilia's birth and childhood are few. However, they constitute a valuable testimony to the first rays that illuminated the course of her life, made up entirely of sacrifice and fidelity.

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

**B**orn on April 22, 1876, on the first Saturday after the joys of Easter, Lucilia was the second of five children from the marriage of two cousins,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Antônio Ribeiro dos Santos and Dona Gabriela Rodrigues dos Santos. Descendants of old aristocratic families of São Paulo, Dona Gabriela and Dr. Antônio both counted “bandeirantes”<sup>2</sup> among their glorious ancestors.

### *Our Lady was her Godmother*

*On the twenty-ninth day of the month of June, in the year eighteen hundred and seventy-six, in this parish church, I baptized and anointed with the holy oils Lucilia, born on the twenty-second day of last April, the legitimate daughter of Dr. Antonio Ribeiro dos Santos and Dona Gabriela dos Santos Ribeiro. The godparents were Our Lady of Penha and Dr. Olympio Pinheiro de Lemos, all of this Parish.*

*Pastor: Angelo Alves d'Assumpção.*

Thus reads Dona Lucilia's baptismal entry in the parish registry of the main church of the city of Pirassununga. Following pious custom, her parents decided that she would be the goddaughter of the Queen of Heaven herself.

Throughout her long life, Dona Lucilia would always foster an affectionate and reverent devotion to her Godmother and would undertake several pilgrimages to the shrine of Our Lady of Penha, in the State of São Paulo, to confide to her the secrets of her tender heart.

### *The admiration of an upright soul*

It was in 1873 that Dr. Antônio established himself with his family in Pirassununga to practice law there. Decades later, when recounting childhood memories, Dona Lucilia would express her wonder at the contrast between the atmosphere of São Paulo society and that primitive rustic environment, competing for ground space with a tropical forest which was practically as wild as when Fr. Anchieta made his way through Brazil's vast regions.

The placidness of little Pirassununga contributed to young Lucilia's close observation and appreciation of her elders. Her capacity to admire the qualities of others had its source in her virginity of soul, which she kept intact.

Reflecting on the inner qualities of those around her, she would

instinctively mythicize them to such a point that her kindly eye was oblivious to anything that might not be virtuous.

Any faults she did notice in their conduct she deemed an exception. To her, these were like minute holes in a beautiful silken handkerchief; it was otherwise such fine silk...

### *A childhood illuminated by the figure of her father*

Dr. Antônio was the object of her special enchantment and veneration. His wishes and preferences were law! The enthusiasm she cultivated for her father was not so much due to his natural qualities as to his virtues. These values, so admired by little Lucilia would form her concept of existence; namely, that life should be woven with threads of outstanding dedication.

On the other hand, she gradually became aware that humanity in general was heading in a direction that clashed with this vision of the world. Faced with this new perspective, her youthful soul would gradually become enriched with the lilac tones of suffering.

A family portrait illustrates this. Lucilia, yet a child, seems to be looking with sadness and little interest at the life

that looms before her. While resigned, she seems to reject a world from which she did not expect much good, at that onset of the twentieth century.

### **The demise of the little lamb**

It would be wrong to imagine that young Lucilia had any less admiration for her father's sterner traits, including those applied to her own upbringing, than for his other qualities. Until old age, she would tell the story of the beautiful little lamb she received as a present from her father. She used to wash and dry it, and would adorn it with colourful ribbons. She cared for it tenderly until the day that a slave respectfully confided to her:

"Little *Sinhá*,<sup>3</sup> I would like to say something so you can prepare yourself. *Sinhô* [her father] is going to have the little lamb butchered tomorrow. I just wanted to let you know."

She answered:

"But that's impossible! You must be fibbing. Papa would never be so cruel!"

Smiling, he replied, "Little *Sinhá*, that is what is going to happen."

Without wasting a moment, she went running to her father's office, bathed in tears.

"Papa! Are you going to kill the little lamb? Did you really give this order? Can this possibly be true?"

"My daughter, it is true."

"But why? He is so tame, so cute; I like him so much..."

"Don't be naïve, Lucilia. One must face things as they are. This will help you to be rid of your sentimentality. Sentiment, yes; sentimentality, no."

He was adamant. The next day, the little lamb was on the menu.

Dona Lucilia always saw this incident as proof of the goodness of her father, who used a hard remedy – overcoming even his own paternal affection – in order to cure her of the tendency toward sentimentalism in those days of romanticism.



**Her youthful soul was gradually  
enriched with the lilac tones of  
suffering**

Lucilia as a young girl

### **The cloak of the gypsy chief**

With scanty police patrols and almost non-existent public defence, the alarm shook up the whole of Pirassununga:

"The gypsies are coming! Lock up the children!"

The gypsies of those days practised a type of terrorism. They came to town peddling small merchandise, and when everyone was least expecting it, they would snatch one or two children and disappear. If the family managed to recover the children, they found them mistreated, filthy, and sometimes sick.

While still a little girl, and panic-stricken at the thought of being kidnapped, Lucilia would observe the gypsies' activities through a keyhole, in order to assess, at a distance, the intentions of her possible assailants.

It so happened, however, that Dr. Antônio had rendered legal services to a gypsy chief, who in turn became his friend and electoral campaigner. He started dropping by the office of Lucilia's father, which was adjacent to the family residence. Evidently, the intentions of a person who showed such goodwill were beyond suspicion, so the child began to lose her fear of this gypsy.

On one election day, when Dr. Antônio's home and office teemed with political supporters, Lucilia discovered the chieftain's cloak on the sofa in the foyer. It was a type of poncho lined with a red cloth which she thought very elegant. Fascinated, she examined it closely, stroked it, and finally put it on, and began to promenade about the house with it. Dona Gabriela was appalled when she saw her daughter wrapped in that cloak! She immediately removed it from her shoulders, warning her to never again touch so strange an object.

This quaint little episode exemplifies the ambience and the domestic adventures that marked that provincial life and filled Lucilia's innocent childhood. ✦

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

Città del Vaticano-Nobleton:  
LEV; Heralds of the Gospel,  
2013, p.51-70

<sup>1</sup> Marriages between cousins were relatively frequent at the time.

<sup>2</sup> This title designates captains of armed exploration expeditions through Brazil's vast unmapped territories, from the end of the sixteenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> These titles correspond to the slaves rendering of "Senhora" [mistress] and "Senhor" [master] at that time.

# You Have Won Us Over, Dona Lucilia!

After experiencing Dona Lucilia's influence over ourselves and observing it in others for years, we feel that she helps to open sure paths for the action of Mary Most Holy.



↳ Raphaël Six

**I**t was raining heavily in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco, Brazil, in 1968. Some followers of Dr. Plinio had travelled to that city to carry out a campaign, a term used by members of the movement he founded to refer to the organisation's public demonstrations, always in defence of the values of the Church and Christian civilization. However, the group of intrepid youths found themselves unable to accomplish their plans, as the rain prevented them from taking to the streets. It was a disheartening situation...

But that was not what saddened them; rather, it was their concern for the countless souls who would be deprived of their apostolic activity. Above all, the leader of that group, whose name was João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, could not resign himself to the prospect that the skies would impede such a noble undertaking.

A man of outstanding faith, convinced that great solutions can only come from above, he decided to seek help there. He remembered Dr. Plinio's mother, who had died a few months earlier, and with whom he had spent much time during the last period of her life, thereby becoming convinced of her goodness and exemplary virtues.

Acting on inspiration, he proposed to the others that they make a simple promise to her in order for the rain to stop: if the weather cleared up, they would pray a Rosary at the tomb of

their intercessor in the Consolação Cemetery in São Paulo. It was the first time that a collective petition had been made to Dona Lucilia – always in the context of private devotion.

In a matter of moments, the rain stopped, making it possible to carry out the mission. In the distance, the clouds withdrew, seeming to be driven away by a luminous force, gradually turning into small spots on the horizon. If Elijah's little cloud (cf. 1 Kgs 18:44), coming from the sea, foreshadowed a storm, these clouds, spreading out over the whole world, could well be said to herald the approach of a flood, not of water, but of heavenly favours.

## *Torrents of graces*

Returning from Recife, Mr. João Clá and his companions immediately went to the cemetery to fulfil their promise. But they were not the only ones to express their gratitude; after them came others, many others...

To cite a few examples,<sup>1</sup> there was a housewife in difficulty who, in 1998, even went without food for a time, but was comforted and fed by a mysterious lady, and who, twenty years later, discovered the identity of the person who had helped her so much.

There is the very young student whose parents, in financial difficulty, cannot afford to buy her a suitcase to transport her belongings back and forth, and who inexplicably finds one at her doorstep.

There is a mother whose son had disappeared in a suspicious place and who, after a night of anguish, finds him safe and sound; or another who recuperates not her son, but her honour, as he had been unjustly accused of theft and is finally cleared; yet another – it is clear that mothers enjoy special attention from Dona Lucilia – who went through a risky pregnancy and was advised to have an abortion to save her own life, but did not do so, and now, alive, gives thanks to her benefactress, together with her daughter.

There are also children who already counted themselves as orphans, because their parents seemed to be beyond hope, but who saw them emerge from a serious condition, recover from a stroke, find a donor for a damaged organ, or be spared from undergoing a risky operation.

And how many others! They are debtors who suddenly obtain the exact amount to maintain their dignity; paralytics who now walk; barren women who carry their children in their arms; unbelievers who find the path to conversion; sufferers who continue to be rewarded with their cross, but learn to carry it with Christian resignation.

## *Life in a cemetery*

Many of those favoured by Dona Lucilia's intercession also materially follow in the footsteps of those young disciples of Dr. Plinio, flocking to her grave in at the Consolação Cemetery in São Paulo. And what do they find there?

Having crossed the threshold of the necropolis, they see a living monument, a simple tomb, transformed by gratitude into a flourishing garden, adorned with roses, carnations, or lilies, but above all with a marvellous aura that attracts and comforts at the same time.

We would dare to say that, almost six decades after her death, tens of thousands of people have already visited that grave – by far, the most frequented in the cemetery – forming a kind of family that has something of the evangelical about it.

Yes, for its members are similar to those in the parable of the banquet of the Kingdom of God: they are poor, crippled, blind, and lame (cf. Lk 14:21), in both body and soul. These are people who, however great they may perhaps be in certain aspects, seek refuge in the shadow of this lady because in some sense they feel that they are little ones.

In life, Dona Lucilia always exerted an enormous attraction on children, who sought her patronage with eagerness. Perhaps this quality was a preparation, or a foreshadowing, of the task she would have in eternity over those who, recognizing that they are not self-sufficient, feel drawn to ask for her intercession.

This irresistible force, although it always remains a mystery, can perhaps be described at least in some of its aspects.

### *Ribbon that draws us closer to the mercy of Our Lady*

If the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of Mercy, it does not seem implausible for her to appoint “auxiliary advocates” – not for small causes, because no cause can be considered small if it is capable of reaching Heaven, but for the causes of little ones – by granting them a special representation, in the form of a pure reflection, of something of her

own mercy and goodness, like a ribbon that symbolically links the faithful to an image of Our Lady that reigns from a high niche.

“But what an exaggeration!”, someone who has never experienced the maternal devotion of Dona Lucilia might hastily think.

To this objection, typical of a certain spiritual narrow-mindedness, it is necessary to respond that celestial accounting is governed by principles different from ours: the things of Heaven, like the Eucharist, do not diminish when shared; on the contrary, they multiply.

Moses lost nothing of his spirit when it was distributed among the seventy elders of Israel (cf. Nm 11:25); nor did Jesus Christ lose His Sacred Heart when He exchanged it with that of St. Catherine of Siena, among others, in a surgical intervention so physically perceptible that it even left a scar. Similarly, the Blessed Virgin will not be deprived of her mercy in endowing anyone She chooses to act in the capacity of her “trailblazer”.

### *“This Spanish lady!”*

However, it is not only kindness, nor only generosity that make Dona Lucilia irresistible. There is more.

First of all, holiness can manifest itself in doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way.<sup>2</sup> The concept seems to apply very satisfactorily to Dona Lucilia, who in life acted heroically as a daughter, mother, spouse and housewife, as we hope will one day be officially recognized by Holy Mother Church.

Of course, after her death, one might say that the picture was reversed: she began to do extraordinary things ordinarily.

Be that as it may, the protagonist remains the same. Therefore, it would seem interesting to look for elements in her psychology during her pilgrimage in this world that help us understand her actions in the next.

Dona Lucilia was a lady of firm convictions. Especially when it came to Catholic maxims, she defended them in a calm but unyielding manner, so much so that she would even seem like



**Those who seek refuge in the shadow of this lady form a family of souls who acknowledge their littleness and dependency**

Dona Lucilia's tomb decorated for a festive day in 1986 - Consolação Cemetery, São Paulo

a “stubborn” person. Dr. João Paulo, her husband, used to joke at such times, alluding to one of the branches of her ancestry: “Oh! ... This Spanish lady!”

There is a photograph in which she somehow expresses this state of mind. It is one of her last pictures, part of the series for which Dona Lucilia sat at the request of Msgr. João, who photographed her already prepared for eternity, as it were, and even adorned with her silver halo, woven with her hair by nature and time.

In it we find her portrayed almost in a position of contention and – a very rare attitude in her portraits – with her brow furrowed. This was undoubtedly requested by the photographer, inspired by the idea of also immortalizing an analytical Dona Lucilia for future centuries.

Her gaze seems to be looking symbolically beyond the roses, towards something that stirs her concern. She has a goal, the achievement of which mobilizes her whole being, as can be detected from the position of her hands, which are nobly clenched. But what does this lady desire?...

### *In pursuit of her children*

The Gospel tells us that if a woman has ten coins and loses one, she immediately lights a lamp, sweeps the house and searches diligently until she finds it. “And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost’” (Lk 15:9).

Dona Lucilia appears to have lost some coins – not those stamped with the face of Caesar (cf. Mt 22:20-21), but with the image of each child entrusted to her by Mary Most Holy. And there are many!

Thus, her mission is an arduous one... But that does not matter: she

will go after them all. And her method is very simple.

It will always be at a crossroads, where her lost coins roll, that Dona Lucilia will be waiting patiently, persistently, and with a holy “stubbornness”. If they have recourse to her, they will be gathered. If not, they will end up in some hole, which will effectively serve as a teacher, and perhaps this will be the moment for her to act.



**Dona Lucilia appears to have lost some coins – not those stamped with the face of Caesar, but of each child entrusted to her by Mary Most Holy**

Dona Lucilia in 1968

We cannot resist recalling one more incident that occurred with a lady from outside Brazil.

When her husband lost his job, her mother recommended, in the terms she saw fit to use, that she pray to a certain lady with a reputation for “performing miracles”. The daughter did not take it seriously, merely asking jokingly: “And does she give money? I hope she

appears to me one day and gets me some money!” In reaction to her mother’s insistence, she became increasingly closed to the idea of turning to Dona Lucilia. The coin had resisted at the first crossroads.

Some time later, however, her son fell ill. The child had contracted mucormycosis, a deadly fungus that could affect the brain. In addition, he was suspected of having leukaemia. The doctors had already decreed his death when his mother had a dream. She saw a white-haired lady who spoke words of confidence to her.

The next day, the boy’s grandmother returned to the charge, recommending that her daughter pray to Dona Lucilia. This time, at least she agreed to see the face of the lady who “performs miracles”. Needless to say, it was the same face she had seen in her dream.

It is true that much suffering still lay ahead. Her son suffered cardiac arrest and underwent several surgeries, but finally, in April – a month especially dear to the devotees of Dona Lucilia – he was discharged from hospital: a new jewel now shone in the crown of this benevolent intercessor.

This is the great miracle of Dona Lucilia: from the depths of the abyss of their own failure, these wayward souls finally recognize their defeat. And, defeated, they cry out. And, crying out, they triumph.

This dear mother, so “stubborn” in doing good, wins over even her most obstinate children! ❖

<sup>1</sup> All the facts stated here were published in this same Magazine, in the section *Highlights of Dona Lucilia’s Intercession*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ST. PAUL VI. *Allocution*, 3/11/1963.



# Fidelity to the Lay Vocation

## CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§898 By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will... It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are closely associated that these may always be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer.

The teachings in this paragraph, a true compendium of the lay vocation, correspond to number 31 of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council. In it we read the three main theological topics that underpin this vocation.

First, the text recalls that the laity are incorporated into Christ through Baptism. Indeed, the reception of this Sacrament, the gateway to life in the Spirit, makes them members of the Church and purifies them from original sin and personal sins, so that they may live an indelible divine filiation and thus, through perseverance in the Faith, attain the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

Next, it declares that through Baptism lay people are constituted as the people of God, highlighting the new and irrevocable covenant established between the Lord and the baptized in the ecclesial community.

Finally, this theological foundation concludes by teaching that the laity, "are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world."<sup>2</sup>

Lay people participate in the priestly office of Christ by offering their lives, activities, and sufferings, especially in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist,



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**Faithful to her vocation, Dona Lucilia shone for her examples of virtue as a Catholic wife and mother**

Dona Lucilia on February 4, 1956

as spiritual sacrifices. They associate themselves with his prophetic role by bearing witness to the Faith, proclaiming the Gospel, and fearlessly denouncing evil in the various environments of society. Finally, they exercise the kingship of Jesus by combating the kingdom of sin within themselves and by making Our Lord present among their brothers and sisters through charity and justice.<sup>3</sup>

In light of these teachings, the figure of Dona Lucilia Corrêa de Oliveira,

honoured in this issue, stands as a remarkable model of fidelity to the lay vocation; her admirable life is confirmed in two significant aspects. On the one hand, testimonies recognize her as an example in the practice of virtues, both as a wife and as a Catholic mother; on the other hand, numerous faithful claim to have received surprising favours from God through her intercession.

These two prerequisites, technically known as the *reputation of sanctity* and the *reputation of signs or miracles* attributed to a deceased member of the faithful, constitute the two mandatory requirements to initiate diocesan inquiries in the causes of beatification and canonization, as determined by article 7 of the Instruction *Sanctorum Mater*, of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

In fact, Dona Lucilia numbers among those of the lay faithful who authentically sought "His Kingdom and His righteousness" (Mt 6:33), shining by the example of virtues and purity of morals, the recognition of which, it is hoped, may one day be ratified by Holy Mother Church. ✦

<sup>1</sup> Cf. CCC 1213-1214; 1272.

<sup>2</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Lumen gentium*, n.31.

<sup>3</sup> ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Christifideles laici*, n.14.



# Constancy in Joy and Sorrow

In a long life full of vicissitudes, Dona Lucilia allowed herself to be moulded by Providence, leaving admirable examples of fortitude and temperance for posterity, the fruits of a profound understanding of the true meaning of life.

✦ **Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira**

**O**f course, I did not know Dona Lucilia as a girl, but I can easily reconstruct how her mentality was formed when I consider her way of being in her mature years.

Her spirit was characterized, in a certain respect, by an admirable uprightness, which consisted of seeing things head-on, whether painful or promising. She considered suffering in its entirety, in all the bitterness it could bring; she also saw joy as it was, without exaggerating its advantages, understanding well that everything on this earth is random and therefore subject to sudden collapse.

For this reason, she took a very calm and stable position in facing life, without turmoil, or great anxieties or depressions. This did not make her an apathetic person in any way, as she lived all events deeply, but always with a certain detachment. There was a layer between her and the facts that the noise of circumstances could not breach or penetrate. And beyond concrete things, Dona Lucilia retained her serenity, psychological detachment and stability.

### *Two ways of considering life*

This state of mind gave her recollection, strength and meekness in all situations. No matter how much circumstances changed, she always maintained the same interior

stance, behind which lay a deep sense of duty.

She did not conceive of life as a certain French writer defined it: “A long, delectable cigar that one must smoke to the end.” She did not believe, therefore, that man’s main purpose was to achieve honours, pleasures, glories or money in order to enjoy himself as much as possible and then die foolishly.

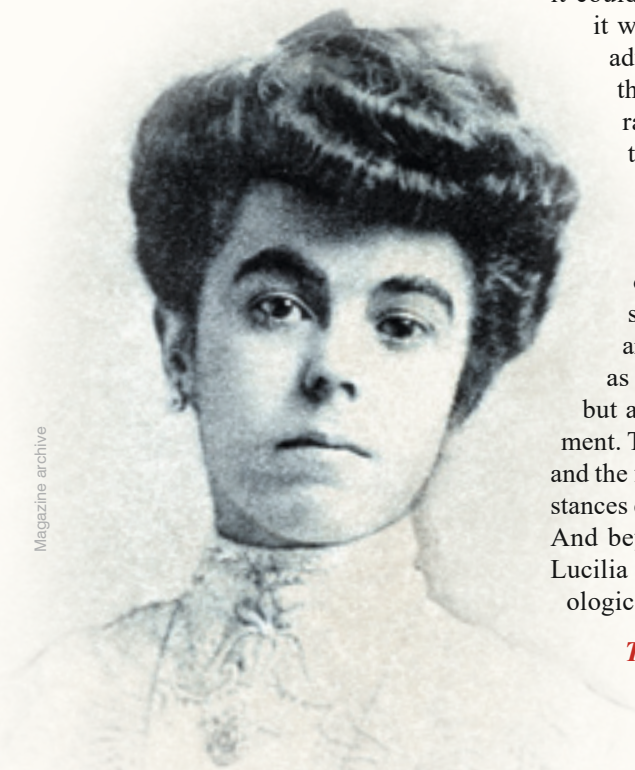
For her, existence was something different. There were pleasures and sorrows; it was even a matter of benefiting from the joys in order to endure the pains. But the goal of life was to fulfil a mission, acquire a certain state of spirit and do one’s duty.

### *Affable and discreet influence at home*

Within the confines of her family, Dona Lucilia considered it her duty to provide formation, well-being and spiritual elevation to the domestic environment, so that her children would become perfect Catholics and fulfil their duties.

She sought to mark the home with affability and affection, to make it attractive and to diminish the influence that harmful places might have on her family.

She wanted to accustom her children to this way of being, so that they,



Magazine archive

**Since she considered suffering in its entirety, Dona Lucilia took a very calm and stable stance towards life**

Dona Lucilia in 1906

in turn, would raise their descendants in the same school indefinitely, as she understood that this was the true way to live.

Perhaps someone might ask: Did not Dona Lucilia prepare her children for the struggles of life? Did she not encourage them to pursue brilliant careers and make their fortunes? Did she not instil in them a desire to progress?

### ***Above material goals, serving God***

The answer is affirmative. Dona Lucilia did so, but always as a duty, which she conceived as follows: “We have a duty for our honour never to lower ourselves, unless it is necessary to do so in order not to sin, and therefore we have an obligation to work, to strive to maintain the family at the level proper to it and to the tradition of our elders, for that which is elevated must retain its dignity.”

Such an undertaking, however, should not be carried out with a view to enjoying the pleasures or advantages of our social status, but rather out of reverence for the ideal of honour as a principle established by God. To this end, it is necessary to live and strive.

Now, it is part of good conservation, if possible, to rise to even better conditions, without ever using unseemly manoeuvres for this purpose, but progressing through honest and gradual work. This is an onus that exists and must persist in order to uphold the family name.

However, all this was not the most important aspect. Being a true Roman Catholic and serving God was the main thing.

Thus, all obligations to the family name, as well as to its tradition, became secondary.



Magazine archive

**In Dona Lucilia's view, happiness consisted in having an elevated, pious and tranquil soul, enjoying the simple, unpretentious and normal pleasures of existence**

Dr. Plinio in 1982

### ***Where is happiness?***

Such concerns were a duty, not a joy. In Dona Lucilia's view, happiness consisted in having an elevated, pious and tranquil soul, enjoying the simple, unpretentious and normal pleasures of existence.

It was not found in big parties, but in the good order of daily life; not in great trips, but in enjoying common leisure activities; not in great fortunes, but in the balanced use of one's resources.

It was a well-being above all of the soul, temperate, peaceful and modest, present even in misfortune, because when misfortune befalls us and a downfall begins, as long as we are not to blame, nothing essential is affected. If a pure conscience is maintained, life is worth living.

### ***Fulfilling the family's aspirations***

Various aspects of Dona Lucilia's life depended on this hierarchy between the aspiration for a happy life and consideration of the true meaning of our existence conditioned. Like any good mother, she wanted her children to develop their talents and qualities and achieve something great. She believed that I could be a great lawyer, perhaps even more renowned than her own father, Dr. Antônio Ribeiro dos Santos.

Furthermore, since I was the nephew of Councillor João Alfredo,<sup>1</sup> our relatives also expected me to become a dignitary like him.

However, when I was elected Federal Representative to the Constituent Assembly in 1932, Dona Lucilia reacted with impressive calmness and serenity. I remember that at no point



**For her, the sense of duty ought to come before the intoxications of glory, and the essence of life was to be a person of worth before God and to appreciate others**

At left, the Constituent Assembly on November 15, 1933; Dr. Plinio is circled. At right, spectators of the ceremony; circled, from left to right: Dr. João Paulo, Dr. Plinio's father, Dona Lucilia, and their daughter Rosée

did I see her overjoyed, even though I realized that this achievement was exactly what she had expected of her son at the age of twenty-four.

### *Duty beyond the intoxication of glory*

A touching episode occurred on the occasion of my investiture as a Congressman. The ceremony was to be held in Rio de Janeiro, and my mother, who had made so many sacrifices to raise me, more than deserved to be present. Naturally, I invited my father and sister to go as well, and we headed to Rio.

On the day of the inauguration of the Constituent Assembly, we all went to attend the solemn event. Dona Lucilia, however, had foot discomfort due to rheumatism, which did not permit her to stand for long periods of time. For this reason, we arrived early, and I took her to a balcony, a private area that the Congressmen could use for their guests. The bell began to ring, indicating the beginning of the session. I had to leave her, rushing down to the official's area.

I was then left wondering whether or not she had managed to be seated where I had planned. When I arrived at the area designated for the Congressmen, even before entering the section reserved for the delegation from São Paulo, which was the first to the right of the president's table, I positioned myself in the middle of the hall and began to look for Dona Lucilia to check if she was comfortably seated. I noticed that she was in a good seat; I waved to her and took my place.

Some time later, Dona Lucilia made the following comment: "My son, I was very happy with your election as Federal Representative. However, what meant much more to me was your gesture of waving to me on the day of the inauguration, from the assembly floor below. At that moment, when you could have been intoxicated by vanity, the fact of remembering your mother and wanting to check if she was comfortably seated indicated a kind soul and a sort of affection far more valuable to me than your position as Congressman."

Her underlying thought was: "If possible, become a Congressman, strive for this; however, this is not the centre of life.

It is more important to have a sense of duty that transcends the intoxications of glory. And, consequently, to have for your mother the recognition that you know by the Law of God that it is necessary to have."

### *The essence of life: knowing and loving one another*

Many years later, on the advice of some friends, I ran for office once again. When the news finally came that I had not been elected, I said to her:

"My dear, I have been defeated."

She remained impassive. I pondered: "It seems you are not sorry."

She replied:

"No, I am not sorry. What is essential in life, my son, is not to be a Congressman, but to be a person of worth, and to know and appreciate one another."

These episodes clearly demonstrate Dona Lucilia's character. Furthermore,

I saw this way of being undergo trials and develop on other occasions, during great misfortunes she endured.

### *Constancy of spirit in the vicissitudes of life*

When she married, she received a generous dowry from her father, which helped to support the family; later, her inheritance was added to these assets. However, due to various circumstances, as she entered middle age, she suffered an enormous financial setback, a collapse so severe that we were threatened with having to live in conditions incomparably inferior to those we had enjoyed until then. I remember her saying:

“My son, you are very young, you have no idea of the kind of house we will end up in. Now we have to prepare ourselves for this because, if God permits it, it is His will and so it will be.”

But she made this comment with complete calmness and dignity, without ever ceasing to be herself, always with temperance and normality, revealing the perfect balance between the external event and its impact on her interior. Therefore, Mama responded to situations with the intensity and scope that was appropriate.

At certain times, due to shortage of funds, her dresses were very worn, although impeccably clean, like everything else that belonged to her. She was so poorly attired that she only went to Mass because she did not consider herself prepared to appear anywhere else.

She went, however, with tranquility and distinction, poised, and without agitation.

Once again, we see here a serenity of soul that placed her above the ups and downs and vicissitudes of life and

made her a person who was always true to herself, even when the paths of life became barred, sometimes in a frightening way.

### *A duty taken to its ultimate consequences*

When she reached an advanced age, Dona Lucilia began to have difficulty hearing and, at the same time, vision problems, at a time when cataract surgery was not recommended. Seeing less and less and almost deaf, she was heading towards complete isolation;



**Even at the cost of incomprehension and isolation, Dona Lucilia remained true to herself until her encounter with God**

Dr. Plinio and Dona Lucilia in 1959

on the other hand, since her heart was in good condition, she still had a few years of life ahead of her.

My conversations with my mother were shouted so that she could follow something of what was being said, but few people had the patience for this. So, when there was a family gathering, she, who had been so communicative,

was left completely alone: very sad and melancholic, but without any bitterness or complaint, walking with that same steady step, forging ahead.

Finally, I obtained the means and decided to try a modern hearing aid to improve her hearing. I bought it, she started using it, and it was a revival. She was very happy, but it was not at all an intemperate joy.

The tone of her life continued in the same vein, with the same tranquillity, the same dignity.

Knowing herself to be increasingly different from everything and everyone else, she did not change at all, out of a principle of fidelity. If she was the way she should be, even if others were otherwise, she continued, because that was her duty. Even if it meant isolation or misunderstanding, she would remain true to herself until her encounter with God.

### *A mindset marked by constancy in the face of suffering*

Her way of being and her mentality were forged by suffering everything she had to suffer, losing everything she had to lose, going through the great and small vicissitudes of a turbulent family life, and seeing it through to the end with complete naturalness.

When the end came, she realized she was going to die, she made a large Sign of the Cross and died. It was the end of her journey, it was over. ✦

Taken, with adaptations for written language, from: *Conference*. São Paulo, 24/6/1973

<sup>1</sup> João Alfredo Corrêa de Oliveira, Dr. Plinio's great-uncle, held various government positions during the reign of Dom Pedro II, including that of President of the Council of Ministers of the Empire.

# Teresita, Living Tabernacle of Mary

A brief, intense and generous existence. Her love for the Blessed Virgin, taken to its ultimate consequences, made her a true daughter and faithful mirror of her virginal Mother.



✦ Sr. María José Feliz

**I**n the firmament of the Holy Church, certain stars seem to shine exclusively for God. There are, of course, vocations that have become known for the feats witnessed by all; others, however, go almost unnoticed in the pages of history, because their mission consisted of glorifying the Creator in the anonymity of ordinary, everyday life.

Among these discreet luminaries we can find a virgin of brief existence, whose radiance invites us today to raise our eyes to Heaven, allowing ourselves to be illuminated by her.

### *Among heroes and martyrs... Teresita*

Amidst the joys of the Lord's Resurrection, María Teresa González-Quevedo y Cadarso came into the world in the glorious Spain of martyrs and heroes, on April 14, 1930.<sup>1</sup>

Her father, Dr. Calixto González-Quevedo y Monfort, as well as her mother, María del Carmen Cadarso y González, descended from deeply Catholic families, and several of their members, during the terrible years of the Civil War, would add to the nobility of their blood an even more precious attribute:

that of fidelity unto the sacrifice of their own lives. Teresita – as she was affectionately called at home – had a high standard to live up to, to follow the edifying example of her family.

But she seemed to enlist under other banners...

She was a strong-willed, impetuous, and extroverted girl, overflowing with life and joy, with a generous but determined temperament, always asserting herself over others and capable of great vexation when contradicted... Her childish stubbornness earned her the family nickname of *el venenito*, “the little venom”, because it was impossible to dissuade that child, so impulsive in her tastes and demands, from any decision taken.

However, above these and so many other flaws, hovered a loving divine design, and early in Teresita's childhood a special hue shone in her energetic character: love for the Blessed Virgin Mary. For her Lady, that strong personality would be ready for the greatest sacrifices, determined, even, to climb the steep ascent of sanctity at all costs: “I have decided to be a saint,” she wrote in her diary when she was only nine years old. And only God would know the meaning of that resolution, for her captivating joy would conceal from others the magnitude of the sacrifices made and the battles fought against herself.

Photos: Reproduction



**Above all her shortcomings, there hovered a loving divine design: her love of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For her, Teresita would be ready to make the greatest sacrifices**

At left, Teresita at the age of three; at the right, on the day of her admission to the Marian Congregation, on December 13, 1944

Time would show Teresita the way in which her life would be consumed in holocaust, but before that she had already found her north star, the ultimate goal of all her actions: Heaven.

### *Two Teresitas...*

At nine years old, Teresita was far from imagining herself as a nun. She was still up to her old tricks, and this incurable stubbornness and indiscipline made it very difficult for her to study diligently, obey school rules, or even to accept a meal she that was not to her liking without complaint...

A single aspect mysteriously revealed Teresita's exalted calling: her purity. Wherever she went, the candour of her whole being was striking, and her angelic bearing was merely a reflection of an unblemished chastity, the fruit of divine predilection. In a sense, a true angel of purity hid beneath that undisciplined and noisy shell, and this innocence, combined with devotion to her Heavenly Mother, would constitute a root of goodness so strong and vigorous that it would override her whims by far. "I love her so much! I would do anything for her!", she frequently exclaimed.

The moment when Teresita surrendered to the love of her life, that is, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, was the month especially dedicated to her by the Holy Church: May! The festivities, intensely celebrated at the school due to the fervour of the nuns who taught there, encouraged in her a great generosity of soul to face thirty-one days of small sacrifices, acts of love and prayers, which could not go unnoticed by the Queen of Heaven.

However, the "month of holiness" ended on the last feast day of May, and then the ever-stubborn Teresita reappeared... somewhat more purified than in the previous May, but still far from the holiness of her yearnings.



**It was not long before Mary's presence began to make itself felt in all her actions**

Teresita, a few weeks before entering the convent

A happy event, however, came to establish the light in her soul – and this time, forever!

### *Teresita's "conversion"*

Having overcome the horrors with which the Civil War had shaken Spanish society, it was necessary to rebuild, on the solid foundations of Faith, the youth for the future. With this in mind, the Carmelites of Charity, responsible for the school where Teresita studied, decided to found Marian Congregations among the students, in order to encourage in the girls a serious life of piety and a profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

The preparations for the foundation, the selection of the first candidates and their consecration demonstrated how much love Teresita had for the Queen of Heaven. In fact, she had always been very devoted to Mary, and even exemplary in her life of piety – a marvel, given her natural tendency towards dissipation – but, in a matter of months, her transformation was evident to the entire school: the clever retorts to avoid reprimands ceased, the disciplinary problems,

the shunning of obligations, the show of displeasure at sacrifice. For the world, Teresita was unable to take her life seriously, but for Mary... what would she not do to please her?

Thus, her days transformed into a continuous "May," and all could see a studious, disciplined, mortified, abnegated, and even silent girl emerging in her... Teresita had resolved to fulfil entirely the norms of the Marian Congregations that aimed at the perfection of their members, and on the day of her consecration, December 13, 1944, she promised to increase and promote devotion to the Blessed Virgin as a means of sanctification for herself and others, being a model pupil in both virtue and studies. Summarizing her resolutions, she chose as her motto as a member of the Congregation: "My Mother, may whoever looks at me see You."

It wasn't long before the presence of Our Lady became noticeable in all her actions, especially when she received Holy Communion: it was impossible not to look at her, her companions commented. The devotion and dignity with which she attended Holy Mass attracted young girls, and her example drew a great number of them to a life of piety.

About two years later, Teresita added a vow of chastity to her determinations, made in the hands of her spiritual director. Thus, this Marian congregant began a unique communion with the Mother of God, through which grace began to prepare her to live only for God. In what way?

### *And at the hour of death... religious or not?*

The inspiration to embrace religious life came to her through one of her worst enemies: a book. Teresita had always detested them, but one day, while reading, as a form of mortification, a book that had been given to her, she discovered God's will for her in its pages, as she later revealed: "When I reached the



chapter dealing with the religious vocation, I understood that it was the best, that this was decidedly what I needed. That last question: ‘What will I want to have been at the hour of death, religious or not?’ was a decisive blow for me.”

Ardent in everything she did, Teresita decided to give herself entirely and immediately, reserving nothing for this passing world. She was then seventeen years old. Hearing the plans of one of her friends to enjoy life during her youth, and then embrace religious life in old age, she told her without hesitation: “How miserly and selfish! How can you think Jesus will accept you already haggard, after you have offered the best of your life to the world? Jesus has better taste and wants you as an offering in your youth, giving it with your joys and dreams.”

How many Catholics today would benefit from this rebuke, to reserve the best of themselves for God and not for the world?...

Before entering the convent, however, she asked Heaven for a snowfall as a farewell gift... And on the morning of February 23, 1948, when she left home for the novitiate of the Carmelites of Charity, she saw her childlike wish fulfilled: all of Madrid had awoken under a beautiful snowy mantle, as a farewell to that soul of immaculate purity.

A light was fading to the world and beginning to shine only for God.

### ***Another chosen one, in the choir of virgins***

From her first days in the consecrated life, Sister Maria Teresa demonstrated a single fear: that of being a mediocre religious. After abandoning everything, she wanted to be a true Carmelite of Charity, and for this she employed all her strength and prayers. And the reader should not imagine that the struggle was easy! Some vestiges



**Ardent in everything she did, she decided to give herself entirely, holding nothing back for the world**

Teresita as a novice

of the old Teresita still persisted in her, cheerful and carefree, more inclined to enjoy than to suffer...

But she deeply loved community life, taking advantage of the smallest opportunities to perfect herself and grow in holiness. On her initiative, the novices created the custom of pointing out each other’s faults at recreation time, in order to help one another improve. For her companions, it was quite a task to find some fault to correct in her... Thus, Sister Maria Teresa had very few imperfections to record in her diary, most of them remnants from the past: “[They told me] that I laugh quite loudly, that when I speak, I get excited and raise my voice, that when they say something to a sister, I laugh a lot...”

An exemplary novice, always cheerful, a lover of obedience and the rule, zealous in recollection and silence... virginal. This is the word that best defined her until the end of her life. As a mirror of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her conduct did not allow for mediocrity:

she was upright both in the fulfillment of the rules and in the struggle against her personal defects, immaculate in her love for God and her vocation, a true consecrated virgin and daughter of Mother Church, according to the image used by St. Augustine.<sup>2</sup>

This virginity was translated into concrete acts, a reflection of the intense love she had for angelic virtue: decorum and cleanliness shone through in her notebooks and clothes, everything bore the mark of being orderly and pristine for the love of God. “Tell me, for charity’s sake,” she asked the nuns in charge of assisting her in the novitiate, “if I exaggerate in my desire to be neat and to wear my habit properly. It is because I like to see people well-dressed, and even more so future or already spouses of Christ, because poverty does not oppose this. If we see that people in the world dress so well because they are daughters or wives of X, how much more so should we!”

Another precious lesson for us! Let us imitate her in this decorum, a precious ornament of souls desirous of perfection.

### ***A final gift***

Through struggles, falls, and victories, Sister Maria Teresa swiftly progressed along the path to holiness. It was to be expected that her enthusiasm would lead her to offer herself entirely to God, which she did on the day she turned eighteen: “At Communion I had such a strong desire to give myself completely to Jesus, to demonstrate how much I desired to love Him, that I offered myself as a ‘little victim’ so that He can do with me as He wills.”

Maria Teresa then combined courage with chastity (cf. Jdt 16:22) in order to climb the steep mountain of Calvary. And God would accept – even hastily – her offering, taking her in the best stage of her life.



The tuberculous meningitis that would take her life was the path of her immolation, to the last drop of blood. No one could measure the extent of her pain, discomfort and trials, for a gentle and smiling countenance welcomed all who approached her. That innocent victim took advantage of the seconds she had left on earth to love, demanding even the impossible of herself in her observance of the rules, in chastity and in daily generosity.

Given the seriousness of the illness, the last Sacraments were administered, and she was allowed to make the profession of vows, ardently desired by her! Her contentment was so great, and contrasted so sharply with the concern about her imminent departure, that one would say that the fear of death did not assail her: “How can I be afraid,” she asked, “having a Mother in Heaven who will come out to meet me? Love the Virgin very much; as for me, the only consolation I enjoy now is having loved her so much.”

Teresita felt like the Good Thief: she had done almost nothing to deserve the reward, but at the last hour Our Lady had obtained Heaven for her as a gift from the Lord... Or perhaps Teresita was a gift to God.

***A victim associated with the Divine Victim***

In the life of a true Catholic, explained Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, “great sorrows alternate with unimaginable joys. Terrible sufferings like Calvaries and exuberant joys like Easters make up a single tableau.”<sup>3</sup>

Teresita drank one by one the sufferings of this divine chalice: prevented from moving, eating, singing... she accepted with full consciousness even the loss of reason, all to fulfil her “do with me as You will.”

On Holy Saturday, April 8, 1950, amid the prayers and weeping of the community surrounding her, Teresita left a body exhausted by suffering. Her eyes, now expressionless, and two tears on her cheeks announced the end of the passion of the one who, joyfully united with the Divine Victim, celebrated the eternal Easter in Heaven with the Mother of Jesus.

The tears for her departure mingled with the alleluias of Resurrection

Sunday, a beautiful farewell for one who on this earth had become a living tabernacle of Mary, worthy of receiving God Himself spiritually within her, as the Immaculate Virgin had received Him bodily.<sup>4</sup>

Without a doubt, one must have a pure heart to know how to admire this predilection of God!

Let us ask Teresita to intercede with Our Lady to keep these little stars, which are the virgin souls, burning in the firmament of the Church, for as long as their light illuminates our world immersed in the darkness of sin, we will be able to exclaim, paraphrasing the Apostle (cf. 1 Cor 13:8): “Virginity never ends!” ❖



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**Faced with imminent death, Teresita felt like the Good Thief: she had done almost nothing to deserve the reward, but at the very last moment Our Lady had secured Heaven for her as a gift from Our Lord**

The body of Venerable Teresita Quevedo at her funeral

<sup>1</sup> The biographical details in this article, as well as Teresita’s words transcribed herein, were taken from the work: LÓPEZ DE URALDE Y ELORZA, CaCh, María Luisa. *Teresita*. 4.ed. Madrid: VEDRUNA, 1959.

<sup>2</sup> “This kind of virgin, no fruitfulness of the body has given

birth to: this is no progeny of flesh and blood. If of these the mother be sought for, it is the Church. None bears sacred virgins save a sacred Virgin.” (ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO. *De sancta virginitate*, c.XII).

<sup>3</sup> CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Uma cruz bem carregada [A Cross well-carried]. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year XXVI. No. 302 (May, 2023), p.7.

<sup>4</sup> “That which happened within the stainless Mary when the fullness of the Godhead

which was in Christ shone out through her, is also what happens in every soul that leads by rule the virgin life.” (ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA. *La virginidad*, c.II, n.2. Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2000, p.46).



Photos: Luis Rivellino

Antonio Rossini

**Rome** – A blessed Marian mission was carried out at St. Albert the Great Parish, from January 21- 25. In addition to moments of fervent prayer (photo 1) and visits of the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to the homes of the sick (photo 3), the days of the mission were marked by Holy Masses presided over by Bishop Enrico Dal Covolo, SDB, emeritus assessor of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, and by the Most Rev. Michele Di Tolve, Auxiliary Bishop of Rome (photo 2).



Karolinne Kauffmann

Salvador López

**Brazil** – Our Lady of Grace Parish of has been very active in recent months. We highlight here the Marian missions carried out in the districts of the main Parish Church, St. Jude Thaddeus (photo 2) and St. Agnes Chapel (photo 3). The latter community also had the joy of receiving, on the occasion of the celebration for its patroness held on January 25, the visit of the Most Rev. Sérgio Aparecido Colombo, Bishop of Bragança Paulista (photo 1).



Photos: Maria Angélica Iamasaki

Renata Cruz

**Brazil** – On January 21 and 22, sisters and collaborators of the Heralds of the Gospel residing in São Carlos carried out a Marian mission at St. Sebastian Parish in Araraquara. With the help of parishioners, three hundred and sixty homes were visited, in addition to three chapels. The mission concluded with a beautiful procession, followed by a solemn Eucharist.



# Twenty-five Years of Pontifical Approval

**O**n February 22, the Feast of the Chair of Peter, twenty-five years were completed since the pontifical approval of the Heralds of the Gospel, granted by Pope John Paul II.

In commemoration of this date several ceremonies were held, among which we highlight the Masses of thanksgiving celebrated in the Basilica of the Conception of Our Lady, in Madrid, Spain, presided over by Archbishop Piero Pioppo, Apostolic Nuncio to Spain (photos 1 to 3); in the Basilica of

Our Lady of the Rosary, in the municipality of Caieiras, Brazil (photos 4, 5 and 8); in the house of the Heralds located in Lima, Peru, presided over by Msgr. Guillermo Inca Pereda, Assistant Secretary-General of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference (photos 6 and 7); in the Basilica of Sameiro in Braga, Portugal (photo 11); in the Parish of St. Bruno, in Santiago, Chile (photo 9); and in the house of the Heralds in Guatemala City (photo 10).



Photos: Eric Salas



Leandro Sousa



Stephen Nami



Nuno Moura

Stephen Nami

Photos: Jano Aracena

Cristian Knudsen

Roberto Salas



Photos: Jesse Arce



**Colombia** – To mark the beginning of Lent, on February 20, the Heralds of the Gospel held a sacred music concert at the Cathedral of Bogotá, Colombia. The event, broadcast on several Colombian television channels, was organized by the Municipality of Bogotá and the Government of the Department of Cundinamarca, with the support of the Archdiocese of Bogotá.

Photos: Marcelo Vicenti



**Paraguay** – The World Day of the Sick was observed at the Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Ypacaraí on February 14. The programme for the day consisted of a conference on the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, followed by Holy Mass and benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. At the end of the Eucharist, the sick who were present were anointed with the holy oils.

Photos: Alcía de Mérida



**Guatemala** – On February 19, the geriatric centre Sr. Cecilia Charrin House, operated by the Daughters of Charity, received the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, carried by sisters from the female sector of the Heralds of the Gospel together with cooperators of the institution. The residents of the wing visited were elderly religious sisters who have dedicated their lives to caring for those in need.



# Retreats and Symposiums

**D**uring the Carnival holiday, instructional symposiums and spiritual retreats were held in various locations where the Heralds of the Gospel are active, aimed at preparing participants to better profit from the Lenten season. The photos below highlight activities carried out in the

Brazilian cities of Rio de Janeiro and Campos dos Goytacazes (RJ), Belo Horizonte and Montes Claros (MG), Maringá, Piraquara and Ponta Grossa (PR), Brasília, Cuiabá (MT), Mairiporã (SP) and Lauro de Freitas (BA), as well as in the city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Maria Fernanda Aguiar



Maringá (PR)

Fernando Bueno



Belo Horizonte (MG)

Kalliê Salazar



Cuiabá (MT)

Júnior Rafael Gonçalves



Ponta Grossa (PR)

Sergio Caspary



Bolívia

Lucio Alves



Rio de Janeiro

Jéssica Beraldi



Campos dos Goytacazes (RJ)



Antônio Zinatto

Mairiporã (SP)

Alexandro Machado



Piraquara (PR)

José A. Filho



Lauro de Freitas (BA)



Montes Claros (MG)

Antônio Geraldo



Lutz Felipe

Brasília



# The “Saudades” of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Just as the sun rises emitting faint rays, indicative of the splendour it will later achieve, certain details of Brazil’s religious history contain a message from Our Lady for us.



✚ Sr. Lucilia Veas

Like a master “who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Mt 13:52), the Divine Paraclete always makes new aspects of the Holy Church’s doctrine and spirituality shine forth within her over the course of the centuries.

Thus, from one of the oldest cults of Christendom, such as that of the sorrows suffered by Our Lady during the Sacrifice of the Cross, a new devotion unfolded; born and propagated on Brazilian soil at the beginning of the 20th century...

### A unique invocation of the Blessed Virgin

Hidden in the mountains of the city of Petrópolis, in the State of Rio de Janeiro, and guarded by discreet Discalced Carmelite nuns, lies a practically unknown treasure. It is the image of Our Lady of *Saudade*.

*Saudade* is a rather peculiar and expressive word in the Portuguese language, which is why it is difficult to define or translate. It expresses a mixture of remembrance, sorrow, and longing, along with nuances specific to Luso-Brazilian psychology, decidedly affectionate, with a healthy note of melancholy.

According to a dictionary of “untranslatables,” published by Princeton

University, *saudade* designates “the memory of a cherished past that is no more and the desire for this happiness, which is lacking.”<sup>1</sup> The classical Portuguese author Francisco Manuel de Melo poetically expresses it: “Saudade is an ill that one enjoys and a good that one suffers.”

Thus, the invocation of Our Lady of *Saudade* takes on quite unique nuances, as it especially honours “the sorrow [...] of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, during the thirty-six hours, that is, the three incomplete days, of Jesus’ confinement

in the sepulchre.”<sup>2</sup> Now, this inclination of the soul, well understood by the Brazilian people, and manifested by this devotion, was a source of abundant blessings and graces for many years.

### A devotion inspired by Heaven

It was on March 30, 1918, a Holy Saturday, at the Carmelite Convent of St. Joseph that Sister Agnes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus<sup>3</sup>, began the until-then-unknown devotion. under heavenly inspiration.

Before its public divulgation, the Bishop of Niterói, Most Rev. Agostinho Benassi –whose jurisdiction included the city of Petrópolis at the time – submitted the content of the new devotion to the evaluation of an eminent theologian, Fr. João Gualberto do Amaral, who declared it orthodox, justifying this position, among other reasons, by the fact that the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>4</sup> refers to the thirty-six-hour period during which Jesus was buried.

With ecclesiastical approval, the Carmelites began to spread devotion to Our Lady of *Saudade*, sending pamphlets to various dioceses in Brazil containing a prayer called the *Crown of Saudades of the Queen of Martyrs* and requesting that those who had



instagram.com/carmelopedropolis

Through Sr. Agnes, a new devotion was started, inspired by Heaven

Sr. Agnes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

received graces send accounts of the graces received back to the convent.

### *The Crown of *saudades**

Similar to a Rosary, but with only three mysteries to be contemplated, the Crown of *saudades* is composed of three Our Fathers and thirty-six *Memorares*,<sup>5</sup> ending with three Hail Marys and a specific prayer.<sup>6</sup> In each mystery, one Our Father and twelve *Memorares* are recited, and one meditates on an aspect of Our Lady's *saudades*.

The first mystery recalls the sufferings that welled up in her soul when the stone of the tomb veiled the adorable Body of Jesus from her eyes. "The hour of the burial of a much-loved one is the hour of supreme sorrow for those who mourn," states a meditation composed in 1943 to accompany the crown, "Although lifeless, the present body seems to deceive the senses, leaving them the sad comfort of a vision, horrible, yes, for love, but which is ultimately an outlet for the last caresses of tenderness, however desolate, before the silence of death. But when the cruel hour of the final farewell strikes... when the moment arrives for the beloved Body to be hidden from sight, oh! [...] In this state of anguish, the bitter thorn of *saudade* first pierces the breast."<sup>7</sup>

The second mystery considers the sufferings of the Virgin in the house of St. John, where She made the effort, despite her incomparable suffering, to sustain, strengthen, and enkindle the faith of those present. The meditation demonstrates that, when sorrow and *saudades* are excruciating, one instinctively yearns for solitude; nevertheless, at that supreme hour, Our Lady did not want to abandon the Holy Women, the Apostles and disciples, who trusted in her. The sorrowful Virgin therefore sacrificed this natural inclination for the benefit of the nascent Church.

The third mystery honours the *saudades* that Mary felt when, the day after the Crucifixion, She returned to

Calvary and there recalled the pain that her Divine Son had suffered without a single complaint. "Who can imagine what the martyrdom of the Queen of priests and victims of love was like in that second ascent to the sublime altar of Calvary, stained with the Most Precious Blood!... [...] While Magdalene and the Holy Women prepared aromatics and balms to anoint the Body of the Lord, the Mother of God concentrated in her *saudades* the quintessence of the most precious perfume that love has ever poured into the wounds of Jesus."<sup>8</sup>

### *Intense sorrow behind a smile*

To further spread devotion, in 1929 a pious soul, who owed much to the beloved patroness of the Carmelites of Petrópolis, commissioned an image of Our Lady of Sorrows to be made in Paris. Sculpted in Carrara marble and measuring one metre and sixty-six centimetres, it can still be venerated today in the Carmelite chapel.

With her feet resting on a globe, the statue holds in her right hand a string of beads similar to a rosary, representing the Crown of *saudades*. Her left hand rests on her chest, pierced by a golden sword.

A crown, also golden and studded with large stones, encircles her head, which remains slightly inclined. Behind her slight smile, this position of her head reminds the faithful who approach her of the intensity of the sorrows suffered in the Passion.

### *Why is it so little known?*

During the period when Petrópolis belonged to the Diocese of Niterói, the local Bishops granted an *imprimatur* to eleven editions of pamphlets containing the prayer of the Crown of *saudades*, gradually disseminated throughout Brazil, accompanied by corresponding small rosaries, as well as prints of Our Lady of *Saudade* and medals minted with her image.

The convent frequently received news of graces obtained through the devotion,



**The image reminds the faithful of the intensity of sorrow suffered by Our Lady in the Passion**

Our Lady of Saudade - The Carmel of St. Joseph, Petrópolis (Brazil)

which spread and flourished throughout the nation. In 1948, however, the apostolic commitment of the Carmelites was subjected to severe trials.

Shortly before, on April 13, 1946, Pius XII had separated the city of Petrópolis from the Diocese of Niterói, making it the seat of a new ecclesiastical circumscription. Its first Bishop, Manuel Pedro da Cunha Cintra, who assumed office on April 25, 1948, forbade the Carmelite convent of St. Joseph from spreading devotion to Our Lady of *Saudade*, restricting the cult to the convent...

That same year, the Carmelites went through another dark night: Fr. João Gualberto do Amaral, who had supported the devotion since its inception, passed away in January, and months later, Sister Agnes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus met the same fate.



**In Brazil, Mary Most Holy wished to manifest the pain of her “saudades” as a foretelling of a triumph. Might She not expect from this nation, as a requirement for her intervention, confidence in the victory of the Holy Church?**

Organ Range National Park, Petrópolis (Brazil)

Achternicharo (CC by-sa 4.0)

Due to the obstacles to spreading the practice, little is known about the invocation and its crown, except for the content of some pamphlets collected by a devotee and compiled in the book on which this article is based.

***Our Lady of Saudade and Brazil***

If the Blessed Virgin Mary wished to be known in Brazil as Our Lady of *Saudade*, proposing to the faithful the sorrows of her Immaculate Heart during the hours of desolation and uncertainty that preceded the glorious Resurrection of Jesus, it is because She longs to transmit some teaching to us, on which we may make a conjecture with filial piety.

St. Matthew records in his Gospel this statement of Our Lord: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in

the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (12:40). And in a passage from the account of St. John, the Divine Master asserts, referring to His sacred Body: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (2:19). These words suggest that it was fitting for the Saviour to spend three days and three nights in the darkness of the tomb, which would total seventy-two hours.

However, He was buried for exactly half that time: two incomplete nights and one day, that is, thirty-six hours. It can be assumed, then, that the faith – full of *saudades* – of Our Lady hastened the moment of the Resurrection because, in that moment of solitude and apparent defeat, She was the only one to maintain the certainty of Christ’s

victory over death, thereby constituting the bulwark of the nascent Church.

Does Brazil not have a close relationship with this Marian faith? Could it not be reserved for her the mission of watching over the Mystical Body of Christ in this dark night in which the world is immersed, imploring the anticipation of God’s victory?

If Brazil was once called the Land of the Holy Cross, and if Our Lady asked here for the contemplation of the sorrows of her *saudades*, foretelling the triumph of her adorable Son, we can suppose that She also expects from this nation, as a requirement for her intervention, a crystal-clear confidence in the victory of the Holy Church and an unlimited willingness to suffer and fight for the renewal of the face of the earth. ✦

<sup>1</sup> SAUDADE. In: CASSIN, Barbara (Ed.). *Dictionary of Untranslatables. A Philosophical Lexicon*. Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University, 2014, p.929.

<sup>2</sup> MONTEIRO, Mozart. *Nossa Senhora da Saudade*. 2.ed. Rio de Janeiro: O Cruzeiro, 1968, p.139.

<sup>3</sup> Sr. Agnes of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who initiated and spread devotion to Our Lady of *Saudade*, was born Ester Vieira da Cunha. She was born in Rio de Janeiro on October 20, 1881. She took part in the founding

of the Carmelite Convent of St. Joseph, inaugurated in 1913 in the city of Petrópolis, where she lived until she left this world on October 18, 1948, exuding, according to witnesses, the sweet fragrance of Christian virtues. Her body was buried inside the cloister, at the feet of the image of the Immaculate Virgin (cf. MONTEIRO, op. cit., p.140).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. III, q.51, a.4.

<sup>5</sup> “Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it

known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence I fly unto Thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To Thee do I come, before Thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

<sup>6</sup> The prayer itself is as follows: “Remember, O Queen of Martyrs, the agonizing *saudades* that tormented thine Immaculate Heart during the

thirty-six hours of thy Divine Son’s burial. Through the bitter sorrows of thy solitude, O Queen, enkindle in our souls the desire to see God in Heaven and obtain for us, one day, eternal beatitude. However, while we wander in this exile, obtain for us the graces we need to love and to serve Jesus faithfully until death; and, if it is thine adorable will, obtain for us (or for me) the mercy we (or I) implore with complete confidence. Amen.”

<sup>7</sup> MONTEIRO, op. cit., p.141.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, p.143-144.

## ...why Saturday is dedicated to Our Lady?

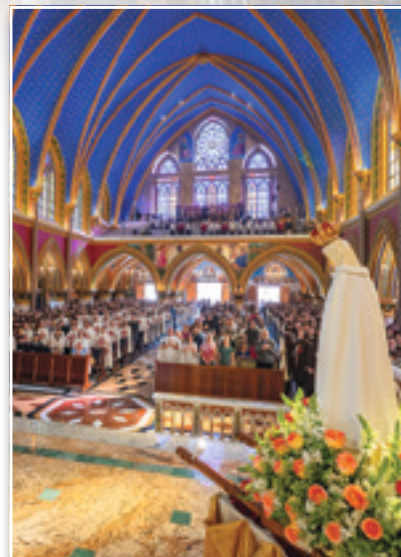
The consecration of Saturday to Mary is a tradition that dates back to the Carolingian era, when Charlemagne's learned advisor, Alcuin of York († 804), proposed two votive Masses in honour of the Blessed Virgin to be celebrated on that day. From the 11th century to the present day, the custom of dedicating Saturday to Our Lady has gained the consensus of the clergy and the enthusiasm of the faithful. And no wonder.

Genesis tells us that God "blessed the seventh day and hallowed it" (2:3); and what creature was, like Mary, so blessed by the Lord? The Creator rested on the Sabbath; and where did Jesus rest for nine months, if not in the womb of the Virgin Mother?

In that most pure womb, Eternal Wisdom chose to dwell, according

to the words of Scripture, which the Church puts on Mary's lips: "He that made me, rested in my tabernacle" (Eclo 24:12). Thus constituted as the way by which God came to us, the Queen of the Universe became, under yet another title, the Lady of the Sabbath: just as the Sabbath leads to Sunday, so too is She the sure way that leads us to Christ.

Above and beyond these reasons is the fact that on the Sabbath after the Passion, the Blessed Virgin alone kept intact her faith in the Resurrection of her Divine Son. The Mother of Jesus was the only one who, on that night of darkness and unbelief, fully represented the Church, ensuring that it would be marked by a Marian aspect from its very inception. ✚



Leandro Sousa

Ceremony for the first Saturday of the month at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

## ...why Latin is the official language of the Church?

In the first community of believers in Jerusalem, the Liturgy was probably celebrated in Aramaic, while Hebrew was reserved for reading the Holy Scriptures. After the fall of the Holy City in 70 AD and the expansion of the Church throughout the Roman Empire, Koine Greek became the lingua franca among Christians.

In the third and fourth centuries, the Greek language lost prestige due to the weakening of Eastern influence on the Church. On the other hand, official ecclesiastical documents began to be written in Latin, such as the letters from Pope St. Cornelius to St. Cyprian of Carthage around the year 250.

The use of Latin in the Liturgy was slow and gradual. Its preponderance grew with the Vulgate Bible, a version commissioned by Pope St. Damasus I of St. Jerome.

With the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476, classical Latin lost its relevance, but remained in the Liturgy and in official documents. So-called *ecclesiastical Latin* remained the lingua franca in the West throughout the Middle Ages, not only in ecclesiastical writings but also in secular ones, coexisting with the Neo-Latin languages.

Despite the decline in the teaching and use of Latin in the 20th century, it remains "the living language of the

Church" (ST. JOHN XXIII. *Veterum sapientia*: AAS 54 [1962], 134) and the official language of the Latin rite, as prescribed by the Second Vatican Council, although, for pastoral reasons, the vernacular may be given a more prominent place (cf. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, n.36).

The new general regulation of the Roman Curia, promulgated by Leo XIV in November 2025, continues to stipulate that, as a rule, its documents should be written "in Latin or in another language" (art.50, §1).

Finally, because Latin does not belong to any nationality, it better expresses the universality of the Church. And because it is no one's mother tongue, it is unaffected by the natural changes of the languages in use. Paradoxically, because it is "dead," it has become immortal. ✚

Prologue of the Gospel of St. John - Clementine Vulgate Bible

SANCTUM IESU  
CHRISTI EVANGELIUM  
SECUNDUM IOANNEM

Prologus evangelistæ, 1, 1-18

1 In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat  
ad Deum, et Deus erat verbum. 2 Hoc erat  
apud Deum.

# True Action Is Only Born of Contemplation

Two Saints, two missions and – in appearance – two completely distinct paths. At first glance, nothing could be more different than St. Therese and St. Joan of Arc. Nevertheless, they share a surprisingly identical depth of soul, which offers an important lesson for modern man.



✠ Fr. Louis Goyard, EP

In a previous article,<sup>1</sup> we were able to consider the heroic virtues of St. Joan of Arc. We recalled her feats of arms, her military genius inspired by Heaven, her audacity guided by “voices,” and her unwavering courage – seen, incidentally, as presumption and recklessness by cowards.

She disconcerted both the most knowledgeable in the art of war and the greatest sages in theological learning. For a short time, her tragic end seemed to assert that her life had been in vain, before the facts attested to the glorious success of her mission. Prophet,

counsellor, general, harmonizer, apologist, warrior – always sublime, whether in victory or failure – she became a prodigious model for all men of action.

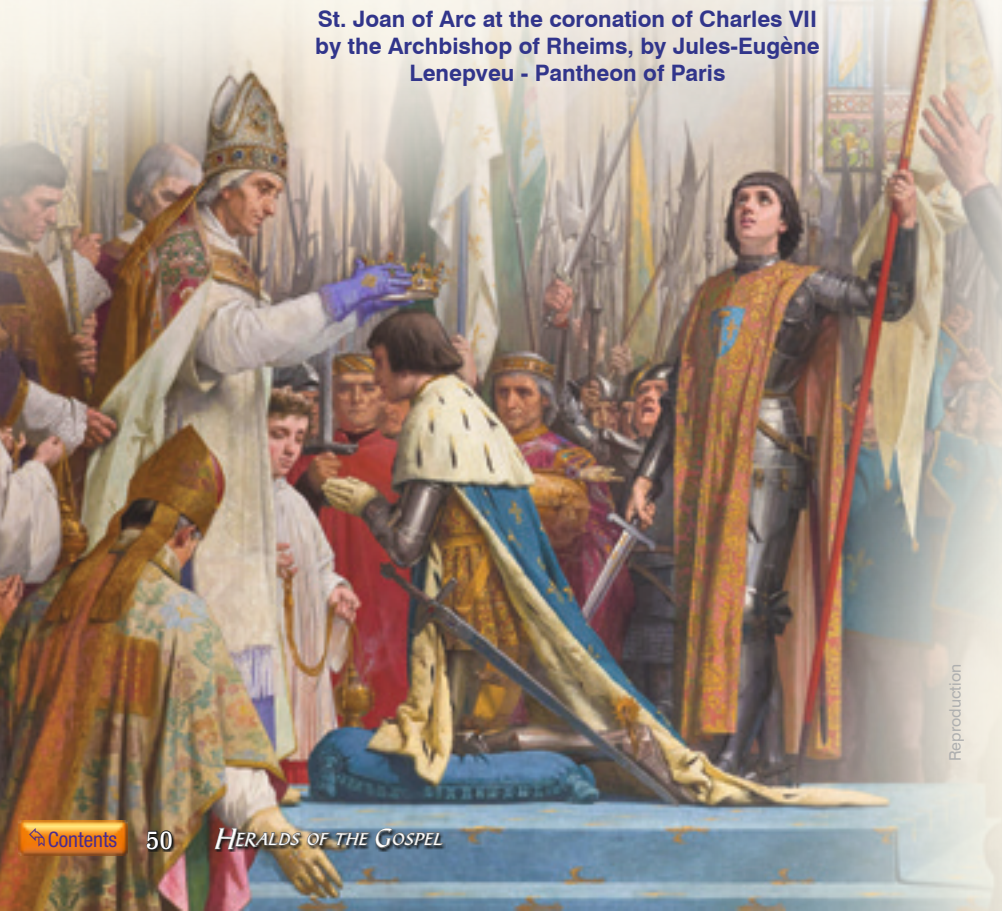
\* \* \*

In apparent contrast we have St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the sweet and serene Doctor of the little way, struck down by illness in the solitude of Carmel. Except for the fact that they were both taken at a very young age, everything about them seems antithetical: the austerity of the cloister against the splendour of court life; the silence of the chapel against the clamour of the battlefield; the calm recollection of divine contemplation against the sharp-wittedness of decision-making; the long agony of illness as opposed to the sudden brilliance of martyrdom... Nothing seems more opposite than the Saint of Lisieux and the Saint of Orleans. Above all, nothing is further from St. Therese than the ideal of the man of action. But... is that really so?

In fact, it cannot be forgotten that this nun was proclaimed by Pius XI as the universal patroness of missions. Was it a mistake or unfounded arbitrariness? For how can this patronage be justified if St. Therese never went on a mission?

First of all, it is known that the Carmelite Saint spiritually guided two

St. Joan of Arc at the coronation of Charles VII by the Archbishop of Rheims, by Jules-Eugène Lenepveu - Pantheon of Paris



Reproduction

missionaries and, from her letters, it is clear that she understood the missions better than both of them, and with more depth than many others. In the second place, her love for God and her zeal for souls made her throb with apostolic desire, which she converted into intentions, prayers and sacrifices, and which in turn were rewarded by abundant fruits of conversion.

Thus, although physically confined by her religious cloister, the vehemence of her soul knew no boundaries or limits. As a consequence, there is no land so remote today that there is not to be found in it a church, a convent, a hospital or a school dedicated to her.

\* \* \*

But in the end, what relationship can be established between St. Therese and St. Joan of Arc?

Just as St. Therese of Lisieux can be considered, in her own way, a soul of action, St. Joan of Arc should also be understood as a soul of contemplation.

Indeed, her voices proved never to have lied: they were, therefore, supernatural. Now, mystical contact with the supernatural is a characteristic fruit of contemplation, without which there is no authentic mysticism.

The very flexibility of St. Joan of Arc towards the promptings of the voices is a demonstration not only of the strength of her faith, but of her keen supernatural sense, trained in constant spiritual relationship with God, a communion that shapes the essence of contemplation. Moreover, the wise answers that the *Pucelle* delivered to her judges came from a characteristically meditative spirit.

We come upon eloquent symptoms of the deep-seated affinity between the two Saints, not only in the role played by St. Therese in a theatrical piece performed at the Carmelite convent, but above all in the reference to St. Joan of Arc as “my dear sister,”<sup>2</sup> recorded in her writings.

\* \* \*

Each in her own way, both of these Saints demonstrated that true action is born from contemplation. Indeed, considered from a higher vantage point, to act means to carry out something planned by God for us to accomplish. Man must, therefore, scrutinize this divine design, and he is only able to do so through inner communion with the Creator; in a state of contemplation. Rightly did Dom Chautard<sup>3</sup> attribute all apostolic fruit to the fervour of one’s interior life!...

However, long before the abbot of Sept-Fons, our Divine Model gave us the supreme example. As He was about to begin His public life, Our Lord Jesus Christ spent forty days in retreat in the desert; during the three years that He preached in Israel, before every great action He withdrew to the solitude of the mountains to pray to the Father; finally, about to begin His redeeming Passion, He first directed His steps to the Garden of Olives to meditate and pray. No one could ever act as the Redeemer did, nor with greater fruits;



Above, St. Therese of the Child Jesus plays the part of Joan of Arc in 1895; at left, in the courtyard of the Carmelite Convent of Lisieux, in 896



nor could anyone’s contemplation ever compare to His.

Modern man thinks he is entirely made of action and for action, together with much agitation. Will he remember that the success of action depends – as heat depends on fire – on having deepened his roots in contemplation, in the soul’s relationship with God? ✦

<sup>1</sup> *Contradictory or Complementary Virtues?*, published in the March edition of this Magazine.

<sup>2</sup> ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX. *Manuscripts B*, 3r.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. CHAUTARD, OCR, Jean-Baptiste. *The Soul of the Apostolate*. 2.ed. Gastonia (NC): TAN, 2008.



## ***The Joy of Giving and of Loving***

**D**ona Lucilia understood very well that the essence of human relationships lies in the affinity between souls and in the happiness that comes from giving to others and loving them, fulfilling with exactitude the principle stated by Our Lord: it is more blessed to give than to receive.

This attitude shaped her spirit in such a way that one noticed in her a willingness to give of herself and to draw others into this

relationship of souls to a degree that I have never known in anyone else. And to this was added a dignity and tranquillity, a serenity and resignation by which, if nothing worked out well, she would not become bitter, indignant, or reproachful; she did not take revenge or become saddened. This is just like the conduct of the Holy Church towards sinners.

Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira