



HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

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*The Secrets of
Mary's Love*



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Goodness Personified

If God is offended by sin, then the Saviour is glorified by the forgiveness that destroys it. He would seem to want to flood the prodigal sinner with His gifts. [...]

‘Go then, my soul! [...] As soon as you feel ill, please do not hesitate to go immediately to the Doctor. Go with as great a confidence as possible. For, it is indeed for your sake that He leapt out of His nuptial bed and with giant steps walked from the heights of Heaven. He came to free you from the sickness of sin because He knew that it is the sick and not the healthy who need the doctor.

‘How foolish are the sinners who seek an excuse to flee from the doctor, reasons that

rather should inspire them with greater confidence to go to Him. How stupid is he who takes for an adversary the man who has come to heal him!’ [...]

It is strange to flee without being pursued, but it is stranger still when an impious person flees with no one in pursuit. He flees even when divine Goodness is calling after him, and running after him with mercy and a remedy for his ills, with the promise of all he needs for his salvation!

TISSOT, Joseph.

How to Profit from Your Faults.

London: Scepter, 1996, p.81-82

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



Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

How can we succeed in raising holy children if we ourselves are not holy?

Javier Acuña Coello – Via e-mail

“If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?” (Ps 130:3). Dear Javier, who among us – parents, superiors, teachers, etc. – would dare to presume our own holiness before the people for whom we are responsible? Undoubtedly, no one!

However, the fact that we realize we have not yet reached perfection does not exempt us from, following the Gospel, giving good things to our children (cf. Lk 11:13a). Nor should it lead us to discouragement; on the contrary, we must always maintain confidence: “the heavenly Father [will] give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Lk 11:13b).

In this promise of Our Lord lies all our hope for the sanctification of our children. For if it is true that the Divine Paraclete will be given to whoever asks for Him, and if we believe, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, that “the [Holy] Spirit is the source and giver of all holiness” (CCC 749), we must also be convinced that, through our prayers, graces will come in abundance to parents and their children. Thus, the first and most important obligation of parents consists in prayer, especially for the sanctification of their children, entrusting them particularly to the care of Mary, the Mother of mothers.

Example is another important element in the formation of young people: “‘The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.’ The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable” (CCC 2221).

Well, for the example to be possible, the basic condition is presence... Many circumstances – such as work to support the family – may require temporary absences of the father or mother, but they should never forget that they have a unique role in the formation of their children. How sad it is to observe children trying unsuccessfully to communicate with their parents, while the latter are alienated from reality because of their cell phones!

St. Therese of Lisieux commented about her father: “It was enough to look at him to know how the saints pray” (Manuscript A, 18r). Now, parents who exclude daily prayer to indulge in the frenzy of cybernetics, a habit so frequent in our days, cannot be adequate models for their children.

Another necessary means for the education of children is correction, unfortunately considered “outdated” nowadays, but about which the Scriptures insist greatly (cf. Prv 13:24; 23:13; 29:15). It should be emphasized, however, that corrections must be applied with wisdom, balance, and kindness, “lest they [your children] become discouraged” (Col 3:21).

Therefore, the incomparable educator St. John Bosco teaches in a letter: “How many times, my little children, in my long life, have I had to convince myself of this great truth! It is easier to get angry than to have patience, to threaten a child than to persuade him. I would even say that it is more convenient, for our impatience and our pride, to punish those who resist than to correct them, bearing with them firmly and gently. [...] No agitation of spirit, no contempt in the look, no insults on the lips [...]. Then you will be true parents and you will achieve true correction” (Letter, 1/29/1883).

It should be added that in the family, in the reciprocal sacrifice for one another, exercised through patience, a beautiful process of sanctification takes place. As the Catechism teaches, “Children in turn contribute to the growth in holiness of their parents. Each and everyone should be generous and tireless in forgiving one another for offenses, quarrels, injustices, and neglect. Mutual affection suggests this. The charity of Christ demands it” (CCC 2227).

In this way, without ever giving up and with total confidence in the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, incomparable models for families, parents and children can walk together towards the much-desired holiness! ✚



THE SECRET OF GOD AND THE SECRET OF MARY

God has an immense secret, which is summed up in one name: Mary. This is the secret through which the Lord chose to accomplish His most wondrous works.

Our Lady is the magnificent gateway through which all the love of the Trinity poured forth upon creation. Through her, the Eternal Word, in whom dwells “all the fulness of the Godhead” (Col 2:9), became Man, raising her, by the privilege of Divine Motherhood, to the plane of the hypostatic union in a relative capacity, far above the Angels and grace. She was in God’s mind from before the ages, in a single thought together with Jesus Christ, for the Son made Man was inconceivable without the mystery of the Virgin Mother.

In view of the Blessed Virgin, God created all beings. The stars and the sea, the splendid fire of the cherubim or the countless sands of the deserts, the flight of the eagle and the greatest acts of heroism: all these, in some way, sing of the greatness of her, the matrix of the order of the universe. Men and Angels will therefore be judged according to how closely they resemble Mary; She is the Book of Life.

But the Mother of Jesus is also the axis of History. Already at the very beginning of the work of six days, the test for the Angels consisted in bowing down in adoration before God made Man, born of a pure human creature: Mary (cf. Francisco Suárez, SJ. *De angelis*. L.V, c.6). Most exalted spirits, superior in nature, were to obey a mere mortal. The proud angels rebelled and were cast out of Paradise. And thus, even before existing in time, Our Lady was the sword that “separated the light from the darkness” (Gn 1:4) at the dawn of creation.

Behold the secret of God. Behold Mary.

But if this is the secret of the Eternal One, what is the secret of His Daughter, Mother and Spouse? What made her the beloved in whom the Almighty, as it were, “exhausted” His creative power (cf. St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*. I, q.25, a.6, ad 4), instating her as the most perfect and unsurpassed of mere creatures?

We find part of the answer to this question in the definition Our Lady gave of herself: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38). Such an apex of splendour could only exist in a soul that preserved the apex of humility and servitude.

And herein lies our secret, which, like God’s, is also called Mary. Only in this posture of humility and loving slavery can we contemplate the Queen of the Universe in her true greatness. Let us not be content with narrow horizons! Let us open ourselves to the Secret of Mary, which will gradually reveal itself to our spirit throughout the pages of this edition.

“Happy,” exclaims St. Louis Grignion de Montfort, “indeed sublimely happy, is the person to whom the Holy Spirit reveals the secret of Mary” (*The Secret of Mary*, no. 20)! ✠



Immaculate Heart of Mary - Private collection

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A Certain Infinite Dignity of Mary

Surrounded by such glory as borders on divinity itself, Mary, by virtue of her eternal election, perfect fidelity and sublime mission, has earned the heartfelt praise of the foremost among her chosen ones: the Supreme Pontiffs.

CHOSEN FROM ALL ETERNITY

The Mother of the Redeemer has a precise place in the plan of salvation. [...] She is present even “before the creation of the world,” as the one whom the Father “has chosen” as Mother of His Son in the Incarnation. And, what is more, together with the Father, the Son has chosen her, entrusting her eternally to the Spirit of holiness. In an entirely special and exceptional way Mary is united to Christ, and similarly She is eternally loved in this “beloved Son”.

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

FORETOLD BY SYMBOLS AND PROPHECIES

Foretold long beforehand by so many symbols, by so many visions and predictions of the prophets, and so long awaited by the holy patriarchs, and finally appearing, adorned with the radiance of virtues and every kind of grace, [Mary] delivered us from bondage through her saving fruitfulness; having crushed the head of the Serpent, She, clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, victorious and triumphant, deserved to be crowned with a crown of twelve

stars and, exalted above the choirs of Angels, to be called Queen of Heaven and earth.

PAUL V. *Immensæ
bonitatis*, 27/10/1615

GREATER SANCTITY CANNOT BE IMAGINED

Therefore, far above all the Angels and all the saints, so wondrously did God endow her with the abundance of all heavenly gifts poured from the treasury of His divinity that this Mother, ever absolutely free of all stain of sin, all fair and perfect, would possess that fullness of holy innocence and sanctity which, under God, one cannot even imagine anything greater, and which, outside of God, no mind can succeed in comprehending fully.

BLESSED PIUS IX.
Ineffabilis Deus,
8/12/1854: DH 2800

“FULL OF GRACE”: THE NAME OF MARY

“Full of grace” (Lk 1: 28), the most beautiful name that God Himself has called You from eternity. “Full of grace” are You, Mary, full of divine love from the very first moment of your existence, providentially predestined to be Mother of the Redeemer

and intimately connected to Him in the mystery of salvation.

BENEDICT XVI.
Speech, 8/12/2006

TREASURER OF GRACE, SUPPLICANT OMNIPOTENCE

By what name shall I call You, O pure white dove of peace? By what titles shall I invoke the One whom the Holy Doctors have called mistress of creation, gate of life, temple of God, fortress of light, glory of Heaven, Saint among Saints, miracle of miracles, paradise of the Most High?

You are the treasurer of graces, suppliant omnipotence, or rather, the very mercy of God which descends upon the wretched.

PIUS XI. *Apostolic
Brief*, 20/7/1925

CO-PARTICIPANT IN DIVINE POWER

This is the most beautiful Esther, whom the supreme King of kings so loved that He seems to have made her a co-participant, not only in half of His kingdom, but, in a certain sense, in all of His entire empire and all of His power. This is that valiant Judith, to whom God granted victory over all the enemies of the earth. [...]

This is that mystical Ark of the Covenant, in which the mysteries of our redemption were fulfilled, so that, upon seeing it, God may remember His covenant and not forget His mercies. She is like a heavenly channel through which the torrents of divine graces descend into the hearts of mortals. She is the golden gate of Heaven, through which we trust to enter one day into the rest of eternal bliss.

BENEDICT XIV.
Gloriosæ Dominæ, 27/9/1748

THE HIGHEST AMONG CREATURES

The Holy Mother of God, the smallest and highest among the creatures, sees things with God's gaze. [...] The Mother of Jesus is the Woman with whom God, in the fullness of time, wrote the Word that reveals the mystery. He did not impose it on her: He first proposed it to her heart and, having received her "yes", He wrote it with ineffable love in her flesh. Thus, God's hope was intertwined with the hope of Mary.

LEO XIV.
Homily, 31/12/2025

A CERTAIN INFINITE DIGNITY

From this dogma of the Divine Maternity, as from the outpouring of a hidden spring, flow forth the singular grace of Mary and her dignity, which is the highest after God. Nay more, as Aquinas says admirably: "The Blessed Virgin, from this that She is the Mother of God, has a certain infinite dignity, from the infinite good which is God." (*Summa Theologiæ*. I, q.25, a.6).

PIUS XI.
Lux veritatis, 25/12/1931

AN ASSOCIATE IN THE WORK OF THE REDEEMER

What deep understanding existed between Jesus and His Mother? How can we probe the mystery of their intimate spiritual union? [...] Because

She was, by the design of divine Providence, the Mother who nourished the divine Redeemer, Mary became "an associate of unique nobility, and the Lord's humble handmaid."

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

MOTHER OF MEN IN THE ORDER OF GRACE

She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the Temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way She cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls.

Wherefore She is our Mother in the order of grace.

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

ALL THE BAPTIZED SHARE IN MARY'S FAITH

At the basis of what the Church has been from the beginning, and of what she must continually become from generation to generation, in the midst of all the nations of the earth, we find the One "who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Lk 1:45). [...]

All those who from generation to generation accept the apostolic witness of the Church share in that mysterious inheritance, and in a sense share in Mary's faith.

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

PRE-EMINENT MEMBER OF THE CHURCH

Wherefore She [the Virgin Mary] is hailed as a pre-eminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent exemplar in faith and charity. The Catholic Church, taught by the



Thiago Tamura

God endowed her with the abundance of all heavenly gifts poured from the treasury of His divinity

"The White Virgin" - Private collection

Holy Spirit, honours her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved Mother.

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

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO ADMIRE; IT IS NECESSARY TO GLORIFY!

Before such splendour of virtue, the first duty of all those who recognize in the Mother of Christ the model of the Church, is to unite themselves to her in giving thanks to the Most High for working great things in Mary for the benefit of all mankind.

But this is not enough. It is also the duty of all the faithful to pay as tribute to the most faithful handmaid of the Lord, a veneration of praise, of gratitude and of love because, by a wise and mild divine provision, her free consent and her generous cooperation in the designs of God had, and still have, a great influence in the attainment of human salvation.

ST. PAUL VI.
Signum magnum, 13/5/1967



“Do not let your hearts be troubled”



✠ Fr. Louis Goyard, EP

At the supreme moment of farewell, Our Lord makes a most profound and mysterious revelation, one that fills us with confidence

St. John is the only Evangelist who dwells on the sermon delivered by Our Lord at the Last Supper, immediately before He went to the Garden of Olives, the place of His arrest. This Sunday’s Gospel recounts the beginning of that sermon, in which the Divine Master seeks to instil confidence and resolve in His disciples, who would soon be assailed by contradiction and disillusionment.

Responding to the Apostle Thomas, Jesus reveals Himself in a summary that will illuminate the centuries: “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6). Indeed, the crowds had seen in Him a rabbi or a great prophet; some even called Him the Messiah. How far they were, however, from inferring that He was the Incarnate Word Himself!

Shrouded in mystery, the new revelation is further developed by Our Lord in the subsequent verses, without, however, completely removing the veils. Only after Pentecost will the Apostles discover the full depth of that message.

He reveals Himself as “the Way” and then adds: “I am in the Father and the Father is in Me” (Jn 14:11). All of Jesus’ teachings pointed to holiness as a means of achieving communion with the Father in eternal life. However, the Father, pure spirit, is invisible to human eyes... How can we reach Him?

Precisely for this reason the Word became incarnate: with the Father in Him, He makes the Father visible. Thus, the “Way” consists in imitating, in everything, the example given by Our Lord: it is, in short, about placing one’s own feet in His footsteps.

Next, the Redeemer reveals Himself as “the Truth” and explains: “The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in Me is doing His works” (Jn 14:10). The Son is the Word of the Father, incapable of lying. Therefore, what He says is absolute, indubitable Truth, from which all truly good actions emanate.

Finally, He reveals Himself as “Life” and concludes: “whoever believes in Me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these” (Jn 14:12).

Indeed, no work is effective without grace, participation in God’s own life. And this most perfect, infinite, eternal Life, the Holy Spirit infuses into us precisely so that we may perform His works. However, this divinization by grace is lost through mortal sin, which literally excludes Life from us.

Now, we were not made for death, but for eternal life, forming a spiritual building of which we must be living stones, according to the expression of St. Peter (cf. 1 Pt 2:5). A condition for this is never to lose the state of grace, Life itself within us; always adhering

by faith to the words of Truth; and to imitate the Redeemer on the path He has laid out: to carry the Cross of each day, to die to the world and to oneself, to attain holiness!

No other message could bring us more confidence amidst the afflictions we suffer on this earth, provided our eyes are fixed on the “place” that Our Lord prepares for us (cf. Jn 14:2). And for this reason He affirms: “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (Jn 14:1) ✠

“The Last Supper”, by Giotto di Bondone - Old Pinacoteca, Munich (Germany)

Francisco Lecaros



“I will not leave you orphans”



✠ Fr. Hernán Luis Cosp, EP

Some authors refer to the passage taken from today’s Liturgy the “quintessence of the Gospel”; such is its depth and richness of meaning. Shortly before, the Saviour had instituted the Apostles as priests, giving them His own Body and Blood as a sign of the covenant. Then, He manifests Himself with special kindness, for the hour of His return to the Father had arrived. But would He leave His children orphans?

More than doctrines, the Divine Master reveals unconditional affection for His disciples. In fact, when we love someone very much, we always seek their presence; the most heartrending moment in a friendship is when one party must be separated from the other, which is why farewells are typically poignant...

Although of divine nature, Jesus was also *perfect man*,¹ acting humanly in everything except sin (cf. Heb 4:15). Therefore, in His farewell discourse, He expresses His best wishes for His disciples. Furthermore, knowing the weakness and frailty of each one, He not only bids them farewell with emotional words, but promises them something that only God could conceive: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (Jn 14:18).

Jesus would never leave His children orphans, but it was nevertheless necessary to depart. How does He “resolve” this dilemma? Through the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will remain not only *with* the disciples, but also *within* them (cf. Jn 14:17). And therein lies the essence of the mystical life: the presence of God within us.

Proof of the fulfilment of this promise is found in the first reading (cf. Acts 8:5-8, 14-17). The Samaritans, who had recently received the Word of God, then received the Paraclete, through the laying on of hands by Peter and John. It was a veritable new Pentecost!

Now, two thousand years have passed, and today that promise remains in us through the Spirit of adoption as children of God (cf. Rom 8:15). To

benefit from it, an interior action is necessary above all: “to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts” (cf. 1 Pt 3:15). This sanctification becomes effective through charity, “which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14), and which consists, above all, in fulfilling what Christ commands: “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15); “Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves Me” (Jn 14:21). Only if we observe His words can the Spirit of Truth dwell in each of us. Then we will not live as orphans: we will truly be children. And we are!

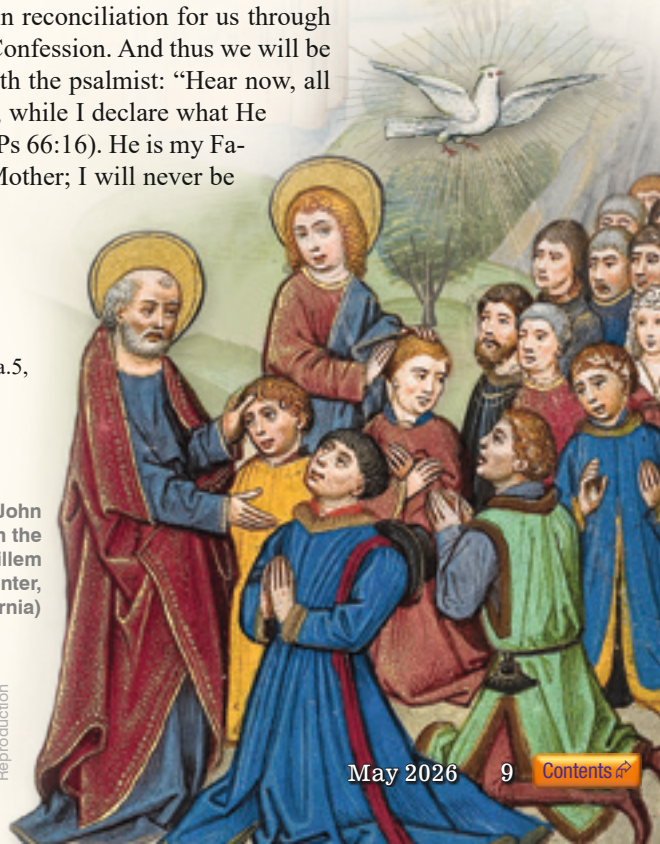
With unfathomable and infinite goodness, God wished to go even further in this promise of His paternal presence: He bequeathed to us the un failing support of a Mother. Let us trust in the protection of her who will always help us, praying that She safeguard our invaluable treasure of divine filiation and that, if we have the misfortune to lose it through sin, She may obtain reconciliation for us through the Sacrament of Confession. And thus we will be able to exclaim with the psalmist: “Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare what He has done for me” (Ps 66:16). He is my Father, Mary is my Mother; I will never be abandoned! ✠

¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. III, q.2, a.5, ad 2.

St. Peter and St. John laying hands upon the Samaritans, by Willem Vrelant - Getty Center, Los Angeles (California)

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The promise of the Divine Redeemer remains firm: if we keep His words, He will never abandon us



Jesus Departed, but He Left Us Mary

✠ Fr. Cyril Avinash, EP



How does Our Lord fulfil His promise to remain with His own until the end of time?

The French expression “*Partir, c’est mourir un peu*”¹ resonates with particular intensity when we reflect on the meaning of farewells in different contexts of life. Journeys, for example, are preceded by careful preparation that culminates in separation. On these occasions, the last words take on even greater weight, especially when the return date is unknown.

On today’s Solemnity we are invited to meditate on the departure of Our Lord. He is preparing for a “journey” without a return date: the Ascension. He will come a second time, it is true, but “of that day and hour no one knows” (Mt 24:36).

Among the central figures in this episode is Mary Most Holy, who had witnessed the unspeakable sufferings of Jesus in the Passion and now contemplates Him resurrected, about to receive His earthly glorification. What must the farewell between Mother and Son have been like? What words must they have exchanged at a moment of such intimacy and, at the same time, of such magnitude?

The first reading describes the disciples gathered for their last repast with the Master (cf. Acts 1:4). He encourages them, promises to send the Holy Spirit, and entrusts them with the mission of being his witnesses “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). He commands them to preach and baptize all nations, assuring them

that He will be present among them until the end of time (cf. Mt 28:20).

After this solemn meal, Our Lord ascends to His heavenly abode. Then, two Angels reaffirm the hope of His return: “This Jesus who has been taken up from you into Heaven will return in the same way as you have seen Him going into Heaven” (Acts 1:11). But how does He fulfil the promise of His perpetual presence? Through Mary Most Holy.

It can be said, therefore, that the preparation for Pentecost began through the action of Our Lady. From the day of the Ascension, She assumed the mission of preparing the hearts of the disciples who, at that moment, were still part of two regrettable groups: those who doubted (cf. Mt 28:17) and those who insisted on the merely political restoration of the “kingdom in Israel” (Acts 1:6).

Thus, it is worth asking: what would the fruits of Pentecost have been without the mediation of Mary? As the privileged channel of the Incarnation, She assumed the primary responsibility not only of preparing the disciples for the worthy reception of the Holy Spirit, but also of preparing them for the great task of evangelization. The Mother of the Church knew well how to sanctify the Apostles for the mission that awaited them. From then on, in addition to the direct action of Our Lord and the Holy Spirit, the history of salvation began to be written through the intercession of God’s Mother and ours.

Faced with this mystery, it is a good moment to reflect: do I place my spiritual progress in Our Lady’s hands, trusting in her intercession and wisdom, or do I try to build my own sanctification based on purely human criteria, as the Apostles themselves so often did before Pentecost? May the experience of the Ascension and Pentecost inspire us to trust more fully in the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, so that She may sustain us until the final encounter with Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven. ✠

¹ From the French: “To leave is to die a little.”



“The Ascension”, by Pedro Serra - Collegiate Basilica of St. Mary of the Aurora, Manresa (Spain)

Let Us Also Choose the Best Part!



✠ Fr. Marcelo Javier Pérez, EP

In her autobiography, St. Therese of Lisieux recounts that, experiencing a certain perplexity in finding inner peace, she decided to peruse the Pauline epistles. By chance, chapters twelve and thirteen of the First Letter to the Corinthians fell beneath her eyes, and more especially one of the passages taken up by today's second reading: "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). She concluded that "the necessary and most noble member cannot be lacking," and therefore "the Church has a heart, and this heart is inflamed with love." Finally, exulting with joy, she exclaimed: "I have found my place in the Church. [...] In the heart of the Church, [...] I will be love."¹

Just as the heart inwardly sustains bodily life, so too the Holy Spirit vivifies, unites, and moves the Church through a hidden influence.² In this sense, the words of Our Lord spoken in Bethany could well be applied to St. Therese of Lisieux: There she has "chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Lk 10:42).

In the Vigil Mass of Pentecost, we are presented with one of the greatest sins narrated in Genesis: the arrogance of the Tower of Babel. Men took pride to such heights that they wanted to be equal to God, attempting to reach Heaven. As a punishment, the Lord confused their languages, causing dispersion throughout the earth (cf. Gn 11:4-8).

In contrast, the first reading of the Mass of the Day narrates the descent of the Paraclete upon the Apostles in tongues of fire. Then, they "began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4), but everyone heard them proclaiming the wonders of God in their own languages (cf. Acts 2:11).

Despite the diversity of tongues, everyone understood each other, for they spoke a universal language... that of the Holy Spirit! Therefore, the Apostle teaches that in the Church "There are

different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord" (1 Cor 12:4-5).

The Liturgy of the Solemnity of Pentecost thus shows us two groups of people with opposing inner attitudes: the builders of the Tower of Babel, proud, self-assured and, consequently, incapable of seeking forgiveness; and the disciples who, having humbly recognized their own shortcomings and miseries, received the Holy Spirit and were even enabled to grant forgiveness (cf. Jn 20:22-23).

Modern humanity, confused in mind and corrupted in heart, as in the times of the insolence of Babel, needs to implore a great pardon. More than ever, the face of the earth is defiled, barren, and darkened by a "tower" of sins, and as a result, it needs to be cleansed, watered, and illuminated by the Comforter Spirit.

We must, therefore, make a choice: either we choose the path of Babel, or the path of Pentecost. There is no third option. Let us implore Mary Most Holy, Spouse of the Divine Holy Spirit, to grant us a meek and humble heart, like the Heart of Jesus, and to help us to choose the best part! ✠

There is no third way. We either choose the path of Babel, or the path of Pentecost



"Pentecost" - Church of the Holy Spirit, Bergamo (Italy)

¹ ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX. *Manuscript B*, 3v.

² Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. III, q.8, a.1, ad 3.

The Communion of the Three Divine Persons



✠ Fr. Ramón Ángel Pereira, EP

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity reminds us of the sublime reality by which the baptized become “gods” (cf. Jn 10:34-36). A lofty mystery of our Faith, the Trinitarian indwelling means that the Three Divine Persons truly dwell within us.

Such an elevated aspect of spiritual life cannot be vulgarized in our dealings with God. This is why Moses, after experiencing the greatness of the divine, prostrated himself on the ground and worshipped Him (cf. Ex 34:8-9), as narrated in today’s second reading.

This posture of reverence will be present in the piety of the authentic heroes of the Faith throughout history. When the Infant God, so tender, manifests Himself to the world, the Magi will repeat Moses’ gesture of adoration. Christ Himself, during His prayer in the Garden of Olives, will address the Eternal Father, prostrating Himself in prayer before Him.

How many saints, throughout the centuries, will also feel compelled to cast themselves to the ground! Even the shepherd children of Fatima will do so, in an attitude of adoration, when the Angel shows them the radiance of God’s presence in the Eucharist. In short, this is the immediate attitude of the human soul before the overwhelming and irresistible presence of the Divinity.

On the other hand, in Lourdes, the Mother of God, enchanted by Bernadette’s pure soul, treats her with great consideration, greeting her with gracious bows, a kind smile, and profound respect.

This is the way Our Lady addresses an uneducated but holy peasant girl.¹

Now, these considerations can be summarized in the term *sacrality*, which, in practice, allows us to participate in the joys of the relationship among the Three Divine Persons: “delighting in the sons of men” (Prv 8:31). It is the happiness of the inferior has in feeling his own smallness, and in honouring, respecting, obeying, and paying homage to the one superior to him.

How different this form of relationship is from certain “spiritualities” or “liturgies” that trivialize the sacred, even to the point of

obliterating it completely! Such deviations are evident, for example, in the vulgar treatment of God, in careless celebrations, and even in the loss of the sense of the sacred in daily contact with others. All this ends up hindering our contact with the sublime mystery of the Trinitarian indwelling within us.

Respect for the sacred has been translated throughout the centuries by the liturgical tradition and its richness in expressing divine worship through reverences, genuflections, and prostrations, embellished by the organ, Gregorian chant, and polyphony, providing the splendour typical of the sacramental celebration.

How effective such external realities are in helping us to understand that we are bearers of this most sublime mystery: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live within us! ✠



The Blessed Trinity - Cathedral of Cologne (Germany)

To uplift,
to beautify
and to
sanctify:
these are the
effects of
Trinitarian
love upon
our souls

¹ Cf. WERFEL, Franz. *A canção de Bernadette*. Dois Irmãos: Minha Biblioteca Católica, 2020, p.93-94.

A CHURCH BUILT WITH FORTY CENTS...

As we contemplate the virtues of St. John Bosco, one in particular catches our attention: the confidence he practised so admirably throughout his life, especially in matters concerning the Salesian Congregation. Indeed, divine help often seemed to be too long in coming... subjecting him to severe trials.

“Our church is very small; it can only hold half of our young people. Let’s build a larger and more beautiful one, where generations upon generations will come to ask favours of the Blessed Virgin!” Don Bosco exclaimed enthusiastically one day.

Fr. Paolo Albera, who years later would become the founder’s second successor, looked at him in surprise, for he knew that his spiritual father’s health was already failing and that the congregation’s financial situation, as usual, was bordering on destitution. He also sensed, it is true, that the desires of that man of God were always granted, but... this time, was the announced project not too bold a goal?

After some time, against all expectations, the plans for the new church were approved, and in late April 1864, the cornerstone was laid. Don Bosco was overjoyed on the occasion. He approached the master builder, to whom he had promised to make an advance payment, and greeted him: “Congratulations on the work! Today is a great day! I am going to give you what I promised. It’s not much, but I promise it’s all I have.”

As he spoke, he slowly took some coins from his pocket... which totalled forty cents. “Don’t worry! This is my share,” the Saint explained, “but the *Madonna*¹ will send the rest, which is her share, to pay for the Church. I will only be the bookkeeper.”

“Don Bosco is reckless; he has no common sense! He will go bankrupt! He will end up in jail!” murmured some bystanders. He, however, with his typical smile of complete trust in God, replied: “Do not fear! It is necessary that we begin; then, God will help us. You will see how the money comes by itself. I am only Our Lady’s bookkeeper. If I go to jail, it will not be my honour that will be at stake, but hers...”

According to Don Bosco’s account, many people from all over Italy and even from Vienna, Paris, London, and Berlin, having made promises to Our Lady Help of Christians and having them answered, were quick to show their gratitude with donations for the construction of the Salesian church. Thus, he could guarantee that every corner and every stone of the shrine recalled a benefit from the Queen of Heaven.

This episode offers us a great lesson. How do we react to the perplexities that arise in our lives? Do we lose heart or do we diligently confide in her to whose dominion everything is subject which is under God?

In adverse circumstances, let us remember the example given by St. John Bosco and ask him to obtain for us the grace of unwavering confidence in the Help of Christians, like a little child in its mother’s arms, certain that She will settle all the “accounts” we have to pay, on earth and in Heaven. ✦

¹ A form commonly used in Italian when referring to Our Lady.



Zairon (CC-BY-SA 4.0)



Luis Zaghi

How do we react to the perplexities that arise in our lives? Do we lose heart or have confidence?

Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians, Turin (Italy); at right, St. John Bosco



Embraced by Mary

There will be a moment in which public opinion, duly united to Mary Most Holy, will experience the gratuitous, enveloping and inexhaustible love of her who will be the effective Queen of future centuries.

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

In his first epistle, written when he was advanced in years, St. John the Evangelist exhorts his disciples to always remain in Our Lord Jesus Christ through the observance of the Commandments, particularly the love of God and of neighbour. He, who in the past was called the “son of thunder” (cf. Mk 3:17), due to his fiery temperament, seeks to encourage his “little children” (1 Jn 2:1) to do so by offering them a very simple argument: “Let us love God, because He first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19).

These few words express a sublime theological truth: though the greatest precept is to love the Lord with all one’s heart (cf. Mt 22:37-38), the most precious gift is to be loved by Him. Indeed, in relation to God, it is more important to be loved than to love because, as St. Thomas Aquinas affirms, divine love is so effective that it “infuses and creates goodness”¹ in the beings to whom it is directed. Therefore, the good that is in us, and any act of virtue that we may practice, come from this love.

Maintaining the due proportions between Creator and creature, something analogous happens with Our Lady, whose outpouring of love towards us is an overflowing of the infinite Love that is God (cf. 1 Jn 4:8). The Blessed Virgin loves each one of us, her children,

with ineffable sweetness, even before we turn to her, and She goes in anticipation to prepare our paths before us. She grants all of the necessary natural and supernatural gifts for the fulfilment of our vocation, and ever obtains torrents of grace for us.

In my specific case, I felt Mary’s protection, care and maternal affection from a very early age, almost as if my awestruck eyes had glimpsed indescribable scintillations of the countenance of the Queen of the Universe even as I lay carefree in my cradle, marking the dawn of a deep-seated relationship with her. Later, when I first came in contact with Our Lady after reaching the age of reason, I had the impression of encountering someone who already knew and loved me.

The awareness of being the receptacle of this Marian love, entirely gratuitous and intensely solicitous, prior to any act of love on my part, attracted me irresistibly throughout my life, making my heart overflow with affection and acknowledgment.

Mary has no limits in the largesse of her love. When her maternal care has already enchanted us, to the point where we suppose that only in eternity will we enjoy greater affection, She then surprises us with new gifts. And we would be inclined to forget the previous favours, if the present ones were

not often their corollaries. This is the path reserved for those who, despite their miseries, trustingly allow themselves to be lulled in her arms, like frail children in the lap of their loving Mother.

This is the theme I wish to develop in these lines: the greatest demonstration of Our Lady’s love for me, which, it should be emphasized, I do not consider to have entailed any contribution of merit on my part.

During the Sacrament of mercy...

In July of 2008, the annual retreat would be held for the priests of the Society of Apostolic Life *Virgo Flos Carmeli*, of which I was both founder and Superior General. However, heeding the fervent requests of spiritual sons and daughters, I agreed to also allow the participation of all Heralds of the Gospel who so desired, from both the masculine and feminine branches. More than a thousand people confirmed their presence, which obliged us to hold this period of recollection within the then Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, today a minor basilica, located in the complex named Tabor.

This situation contravened the institution’s usual practice of organizing its retreats with a relatively small number of participants, and caused me some concern. However, with Our Lady’s



Sérgio Miyazaki

Carlos Augusto Leal

Our Lady availed herself of the circumstances of a retreat to grant Msgr. João the greatest grace of his life, in the line of mystical experiences

View of the retreat in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, in June of 2008, inset, Msgr. João while preaching during the same event

help, the risky experiment proved successful, and Heralds of the most varied ages easily followed the meditations, dealing fundamentally with the virtue of humility.

Nevertheless, a problem presented itself: since the retreat was originally intended for the priests, it made no sense to take them from their recollection to attend the general Confessions of that multitude, which, according to the Ignatian outline, should occur within the first couple of days. Therefore, it was decided to recommend that everyone make their examination of conscience at the appropriate time, but keep it until the last day, which, after the concluding morning meditation, would be dedicated to administering the Sacrament of Penance to those who so desired.

Thus, on the morning of July 12, 2008, the numerous priests in attendance occupied all the available confessionals, chapels and rooms in order to grant sacramental absolution to their brothers in the vocation. During the retreat, I had also received several requests from sons and daughters, for me to hear their Confessions. However, when I was ready to attend to them, there was no better place left, which

was both public and discreet, than the space between the tabernacle and the altar of the church, where I placed a chair for myself and a kneeler for the penitents. Our Lady would avail herself of these circumstances to grant me the greatest grace of my life, in the realm of mystical experience.

...the greatest sensible manifestation of Mary's mercy

The Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary is presided over by an expressive statue of the Virgin of Fatima, with her Immaculate Heart exposed, as She appeared in one of her apparitions in the Cova da Iria. I was half a metre away from the tabernacle, and little more than a metre from the image.

The atmosphere created by the Confessions was conducive to an examination of conscience, and, while hearing one of the penitents, I felt keen regret in considering that I had perhaps not made sufficient reference to Mary Most Holy during the retreat conferences. At that moment, the strains of the Gregorian hymn *Rosa Carmeli* sounded from the church's speakers, bringing my mind back to my first encounter with Dr. Plinio in the Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in São Paulo.²

This remembrance was accompanied by the idea of the immeasurable love that the most tender of mothers had for the Child Jesus when holding Him in her arms. And I pondered how extraordinary it must be, not only for her Divine Son, but for whoever might be blessed with this grace, to thus repose in her arms. In spite of the consideration of my own miseries, I felt a great desire to raise my gaze to Our Lady, who was so close, but I initially chose to remain recollected during the Confession.

Finally, giving in to this filial impulse, I looked up to the image and suddenly became completely oblivious to concrete reality, as if I were outside of myself and separated from my surroundings. I then felt myself physically in the arms of Our Lady, with my forehead resting against her shoulder and cheek – and I affirm this with extreme respect, and without daring to make the least absurd comparison – as the Child Jesus appears in the statues of the invocation *Sedes Sapientiae*. And Mary caressed me with her virginal hands. She said nothing to me, but... to be caressed and embraced by the Queen of Heaven and earth... What more could one desire?



Maurício Reis

“I then felt myself physically in the arms of Our Lady, with my forehead resting against her shoulder and cheek, as the Child Jesus appears in the statues of the invocation ‘Sedes Sapientiæ’”

The place where Msgr. João heard Confessions during the retreat

The experience also involved the sense of sight, so that I saw Our Lady more or less as that Fatima statue represents her. However, the embrace was so physically sensible and cogent that I did not manage to accurately consign her facial features to memory. Absorbed in that “heaven,” I did nothing; I merely let myself be embraced by my Mother. A torrent of consolation overwhelmed me, as never before in my life, making me shed abundant tears.

Although the phenomenon occurred during the hearing of a Confession, the penitent failed to notice anything. Perhaps Providence thus disposed things, for I was obliged to control myself somewhat, fearing that the one confessing his faults in the Holy Tribunal of Penance might suppose that those tears were caused by the sins told. If I had been alone, what might have happened? Perhaps I would have died, for St. Thomas teaches³ that it is not possible for man to enjoy total bliss in this life.

Let us allow ourselves to be loved by Our Lady

The narration of these episodes calls to mind the meaning of the word *mercy* [*miser cordia*], that is, love for the miserable. It entails a sublime mystery, diametrically opposed to the mystery of iniquity. When Our Lady loves someone with a gratuitous predilection of her Heart, the person need only allow himself to be taken up!

We must have absolute confidence in the Saviour and His Blessed Mother. Our Lord does not love us because of some good that might exist in us, but because, seeing our nothingness, He feels the need to instil there the Good that He is in essence. When He encounters a miserable person, the Heart of Jesus sighs with the desire to help him, as His Heart was created for this purpose, and He can only demonstrate the superabundance of His love in this way. Respecting due proportions, the same is true of the Blessed Virgin. How could it be different if, according to St. John

Eudes’ happy expression,⁴ her Heart is one with the Heart of Jesus?

I was a “victim” of this love when I was embraced by Our Lady... Therefore, I speak as one acquainted with the subject matter. And I understood this reality better when, in 2010, I suffered a cerebrovascular accident that marked a tremendous turnabout in my life, and the onset of many long years of physical and moral suffering. Amid this veritable *via crucis*, I can affirm that the love Mary manifested in that embrace has always sustained me, even in the times of greatest aridity.

But how can one instil in souls an enthusiasm for this love, which comes so naturally

for those who have experienced it? Observing those with whom I have contact, in the exercise of my ministry, the following thought often comes to my mind: “If each and every one only knew how much Our Lord and Our Lady love them, they would become great saints!” The problem lies in estimating Jesus and Mary’s love for us according to the human criteria to which we are accustomed, that is, revolving around personal correspondence and merit.

In reality, what does God expect in order to inundate us with His love? First of all, simplicity, a virtue too often ignored. When the Almighty deigns to allow Himself to be won over by someone, He does so by means of simplicity; that is how Our Lady “conquered” Him. Rendering ourselves small before the Most High and His Mother brings us this unsurpassed reward.

We often complain about spiritual aridity and lack of interior incentive for the practice of virtue. At these moments we should ask ourselves: “Am I making myself little?” Relations with

our sovereign Queen, and comprehension of her will only blossom from this disposition of soul recommended by the Divine Master in the Gospel (cf. Mt 18:3).

Our Lady wishes to embrace humanity in the Reign of Mary

As a conclusion to these thoughts, I wish to express to the reader my desire that the embrace received in 2008 be extended to countless people, because I believe that it was the forerunner of others, and the pledge of a new regime of grace that Our Lady wants to obtain for humanity.

For me, the embrace I received from Our Lady on July 12, 2008, signified exactly this: that the Queen of the Universe had opened the doors of the Reign of Mary to me. In what sense? It could be said that this Marian era, in its most sublime aspect, will consist of an embrace from her to all her children.

Yes, for mysticism is not a privilege of the great contemplatives or a few souls called to an exceptional path, as a certain warped concept of spirituality might have one believe. Though such a concept be entrenched in many souls and environments, the ordinary path of holiness actually includes both asceticism and mysticism. Asceticism is aided by cooperative graces, which demand our effort; and mysticism is characterized by efficacious and sensible graces, making us experience, deep within our souls, who God is.

Therefore, all those who have been chosen, out of gratuitous goodness, to contemplate the Reign of Mary, must be favoured with mystical graces of the highest calibre. Only thus will this glorious historical era bear the fruits prophesied by so many Saints, for the greater glory of God.

For this reason, I nurture in my heart the certainty that there will be

a moment in which public opinion devoted to the Holy Church and thus, duly united to Mary Most Holy, will experience, by a special action of God, the gratuitous, enveloping and inexhaustible love of her who will be the effective Queen of future centuries. In a word, the day will come, and is not far off, when Mary will embrace her

by our merits, but by her mercy, we arrive there.

Foolish are those who abandon Mary's maternal mantle to wallow in the swine's slop of today's paganized and revolutionary world, which threatens imminent collapse. Foolish indeed, because it is a sign of predestination to be under the aegis of this sacred mantle, and a guarantee of many graces. Sheltered beneath it, let us await the great events that can already be detected on the horizon!

Such events will bring the blessed times in which humanity will, as no one has in all of history, with the exception of St. Joseph, advance in the loving comprehension of the Blessed Virgin's person, her spirit, her mentality and her mission.

For our part, we must strive to enter this *Hortus Conclusus*, an enclosed garden that only She can open to us, and thus respond to our Mother's desire to be known and loved with a perfect love. When this garden is opened, Heaven will unite with earth, hell will be defeated, and the Angels will join with mankind in singing: "Glory to Mary in her Reign, for her Immaculate Heart has triumphed!" ✦



"If you allow yourselves to be loved by her, you will be embraced as I once was!"

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom -
Private collection

faithful children, as She was so good to have embraced me.

This is a promise, based upon what grace murmurs within my soul, and here made to those who read these lines: "If you are true children of Our Lady, that is, if you allow yourselves to be loved by her, you will be embraced as I once was!" And this embrace will prepare us for the eternal embrace that She will give us in Heaven when, not

Taken, with adaptations, from:
*Mary Most Holy: The Paradise of
God Revealed to Men.*

Houston: Heralds of the Gospel,
2020, v.I, p.31-33; 153-181

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I, q.20, a.2.

² Editor's note: a meeting that took place on July 7, 1956, marking a milestone in Msgr. João's dedication to the service of the Holy Church.

³ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., I-II, q.5, a.3.

⁴ Cf. ST. JOHN EUDES. *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*. Fitzwilliam: Loreto, 2004, p.108-110.

Hidden Wisdom, an Ineffable Treasure

Of all the blessed, Our Lady is the closest to us, and hidden within our spiritual relationship with her is a most precious secret...



✦ Bruna Piva

A masterpiece of creation, the Most Holy Virgin Mary was favoured by God with such sublime perfection and such exalted gifts that the Church, in its desire to

honour her worthily, has been “inexhaustible” in proclaiming her praises, particularly through the words and writings of its saints and Doctors.

St. Thomas Aquinas states that “the Blessed Virgin from the fact that She is the mother of God [has] a certain infinite dignity, from the infinite good, which is God.”¹

St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, for his part, calls Our Lady “the vast and divine world of God where unutterable marvels and beauties are to be found. She is the magnificence of the Almighty where He hid His only Son, as in His own bosom, and with Him everything that is most excellent and precious.” And in a rapture of devotion, the eminent Marian apostle continues: “the height of her merits rising up to the throne of the Godhead cannot be perceived; the breadth of her love which is wider than the earth cannot be measured; the greatness of the power which She wields over one who is God cannot be conceived; and the depths of her profound humility and

all her virtues and graces cannot be sounded.”²

Upon hearing these and so many other accolades, our faith certainly exults with admiration and love for the Queen of the Universe. However, contemplating her boundless greatness may produce in our soul an understandable sense of smallness: “My Mother, how beautiful and admirable You are! And I, how poor and wretched... There is an abyss between You and me, and I can see you only as an inaccessible paradise, a sublime light which has, at best, but a distant and ethereal connection with me.”

However, no supposition could be more false!

A relationship that holds a sublime mystery

For souls who turn to Mary, one of the most striking aspects of her holiness is her compassion towards sinners. Far from despising us for our weakness, She looks upon us with pity, with a desire to do us good, with a mercy endowed with countless attributes: inexhaustible, most patient, most clement, tireless, unshakable...

Always solicitous and kind, Our Lady takes on our stature to favour us; and She does so not merely for the benefit of a few privileged souls, but



Timothy Ring

The Mother of God looks upon us with pity, desiring to do good for each and every one of us

Our Lady of Fatima - Private collection

for anyone and everyone, for all men, past and present, for the sinners who fill the streets; for *all*, this is exactly how She is.³

As if such goodness were not enough, the Queen of the Universe, who in Heaven enjoys the infinite bliss of the beatific vision, still cherishes this insatiable desire: to communicate more closely with us. And hidden in this relationship, through which we respond to her love, lies a most precious mystery, which St. Louis Grignion describes as “the great secret to becoming a saint”⁴ and, moreover, the indispensable means for the effective establishment of the Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus Christ on earth.⁵

An inexhaustible source of grace

When discussing the role of Our Lady in our sanctification, St. Louis is emphatic. Drawing on traditional doctrine, he maintains that the principal means of attaining superabundant divine grace is to cultivate an ardent Marian devotion and, thereby, to establish a deep spiritual bond with the Blessed Virgin. This thesis is corroborated by great theologians, such as St. Albert the Great,⁶ and more recent Mariologists, such as Roschini⁷ and Alastruey.⁸

Indeed, it was Mary alone who found favour with God, for herself and for all mankind, for She gave birth to the very Author of grace, which earned her the title of *Mater Gratiae*.⁹

If we follow the splendid spiritual path of union with Our Lady, the most abundant graces that we shall receive will cause the practice of the traditional means of salvation to bear marvellous fruit. On this arduous path, the Virgin will enlighten us with her light, nourish us with her milk, guide us with

her spirit, sustain us with her arm and keep us under her protection. She shall be the vital sap that propels each one of us toward union with the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son.¹⁰

Through Mary, all things can be restored

To assert, however, that Our Lady has full power to sanctify us from this moment on would not be enough. Her

the highest degree, all the general and special graces granted to all creatures.¹²

Since Mary was free from any sin or imperfection, and always corresponded in the most perfect manner to every grace She received, we must regard her – concludes Dr. Plinio – as a sacred Ark containing all that is beautiful, good and true which men have rejected throughout history, in unimaginable proportions.

Within her, these splendours remain in a state of integrity and full acceptance, and it is certainly for this reason that humanity, having rejected God so callously and slipped into abysses of impiety, can still receive forgiveness and be restored.

Thus, when we feel remorse for our infidelities or long for the splendours of Christendom, let us imagine the past living on within Our Lady and take comfort in the thought that, through her intercession, everything may be restored. On a personal level, we may also ask Our Lady to offer to God on our behalf the integrity we lacked, for She represents in the highest degree what we ought to be, and thus to offer to Jesus Christ the honours we have failed to pay Him.

We may conclude, therefore, that the Most Holy Mary embodies in herself the perfect solution for each of us individually, as well as for the whole of history. Rightly, the Church has invoked her since time immemorial as “our life, our sweetness and our hope”, and St.

Bernard implores her: “Mother of life and salvation, may thy integrity excuse in the presence of thy Son the guilt of our corruption.”¹³

The highest degree of union with God

This solution, which draws from a special devotion to Our Lady, will not,



Gustavo Kraji

The Most Holy Mary embodies within herself the perfect solution for each of us individually

Madonna of Mercy, by Lippo Memmi - Cathedral of Orvieto (Italy)

power is able, in a certain sense, to encompass even our past.

Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira,¹¹ a most ardent devotee of Mary, in conversation with some of his spiritual sons, explained a most beautiful aspect of Our Lady’s holiness in relation to us, basing himself on the fact accepted by Mariology that She possesses, to

Christ's reign through Mary will be the historical era "in which her spirit will be present in every creature and her love will cover the whole earth like a delicate and pure mist"

View of the Erlauf Valley, in the Ybbstal Alps (Áustria)

however, consist in a "common holiness" – if one may put it that way – but rather in a most exalted union with God, as is well expressed in the exclamation of St. John Eudes:

"Heroes, geniuses in the order of grace, and marvels of holiness have blossomed above all from devotion to the Most Holy Virgin, the Saint par excellence! It is precisely in her school that they learned the secrets of holiness and from which they drew the graces of light and love that raised them to the summit of perfection!"¹⁴

Hence St. Louis Grignion refers to the relationship with Mary as a secret, unknown to most men. Those who are initiated into this secret will be regenerated to the supernatural life, in a phenomenon similar to what occurred with the Child Jesus during His sacred gestation: Mary will sustain them with her existence and nourish them with her virtues;¹⁵ She will become the life of her children on the spiritual plane, and they will no longer think, will, or act without her, which constitutes the highest degree of union with God.¹⁶

The souls thus inserted into the very heart of Our Lady will become *living copies* of her to love, serve, and glorify Jesus Christ.¹⁷

Commenting on the effects of Marian devotion, Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP,¹⁸ speculates that, since goodness is eminently diffusive, the Blessed Virgin will ensure that we participate in some way in the

superabundance of grace that She possesses by virtue of her connection to the hypostatic union. The Mother of God will "pour out" her own will, as it were, into our souls, as a precious liquid poured into a crystal goblet; we shall thereby acquire her mentality and desire everything She desires, through free acceptance, like an Angel in Heaven.¹⁹

In this spiritual relationship with Our Lady, we can become Marian souls, by means of an easier, more serene and sure path to holiness. Through grace, great saints will be forged, who, compared to those of the past, will be like cedars of Lebanon in relation to shrubs.²⁰

Consequently, Christ's reign through Mary will be the historical era "in which her spirit will be present in every creature and her love will cover the whole earth like a delicate and pure mist. Just as in the current times the foul and pestilent breath [of the devil], characterized by revolt, by egalitarianism and by sensuality, is inhaled in all places, during the Reign of Mary the sweet aroma of the presence and the virtues of the Heavenly Queen will be breathed in both souls and in ambiances, as well as in customs and even in civilizations."²¹

"My Mother, I am all thine!"

Now, in what does this fruitful relationship with Our Lady consist? And how does one attain it?

The answer to these questions is set out by the Apostle of Mary in his famous *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*. In this work, St. Louis teaches a form of devotion that brings us into the closest possible union with her, namely, the *slavery of love*.

This sacred slavery consists in giving oneself completely to Our Lady so that, through her, we may belong entirely to Jesus Christ. We must offer her our body with all its members and senses; our soul with all its faculties; our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits, our virtues and our good works past, present and future, as well as all our material goods; in short, everything we have and may have in the order of nature, grace and glory, without exception.²²

Whoever opens their soul to the overflowing mercy of Our Lady will understand that the consecration proposed by St. Louis Grignion is but a consequence of such a relationship with the Mother of God; and furthermore, as Roschini comments,²³ a necessity for every Christian worthy of the name.

Indeed, from the loving acceptance of mercy springs, spontaneously, the desire for this blessed slavery. It is as if Our Lady had said to us: "My child, above all else and despite any failings, I love you!"; and received from us the reply: "My Mother, I am all thine!"²⁴

A soul thus consecrated will always be able to declare by virtue of this offering that everything it does,

however insignificant, belongs to Jesus and Mary;²⁵ and, by persevering in this grace, it will be able to freely enjoy the unfathomable benefits described in these pages, and many others that cannot be enumerated.

The righteous shall enter through this gate

“My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor 12:9), replied the Saviour to the Apostle of the Gentiles when he sought His help in temptation. This counsel, transcending the limits of the personal trial endured by St. Paul, applies to all of us who labour in this vale of tears.

Divine grace is the only thing we need, and upon it depends our salvation and that of the whole world. Let others devote themselves to accumulating merits by their own efforts; as for us, let us seek grace, and let us seek it in her who is and always will be “full of grace” (Lk 1:28): Mary!²⁶

The Blessed Virgin is truly “the gate of the Lord” proclaimed in the Book of Psalms (cf. Ps 118:20): everyone who wishes to be righteous and to work effectively for the restoration of the world will enter through her! ✚



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**The Blessed Virgin is truly “the gate of the Lord”:
everyone who wishes to be righteous will enter through her**

Our Lady of Grace - Private collection

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I, q.25, a.6, ad 4.

² ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary* n.6-7.

³ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 9/1/1982.

⁴ ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *The Secret of Mary*, n.1.

⁵ Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.13.

⁶ Cf. ST. ALBERT THE GREAT. *Mariale*, q.164.

⁷ Cf. ROSCHINI, OSM, Gabriel. *Instruções marianas*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 1960, p.251-252.

⁸ Cf. ALASTRUEY, Gregório. *Tratado de la Virgen Santísima*. 4.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1956, p.626.

⁹ Cf. ALASTRUEY, Gregório. *Tratado de la Virgen Santísima*. 4.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1956, p.626.

¹⁰ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Mary Most Holy: The Paradise of God Revealed to Men*. Houston: Heralds of the Gospel, 2025, v.III, p.133.

¹¹ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Talk*, 13/12/1977.

¹² Cf. ST. ALBERT THE GREAT, op. cit., q.164.

¹³ ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. *Sermo tertius in Adventu Domini*, n.5.

¹⁴ ST. JOHN EUDES. *Maria. Meditaciones*. Bilbao: Vizcaína, 1951, p.21.

¹⁵ Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.206.

¹⁶ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, op. cit., p.140-141.

¹⁷ Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.217.

¹⁸ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Talk*. Madrid, 17/4/1999.

¹⁹ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 26/4/1974.

²⁰ Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.47; 152-182.

²¹ CLÁ DIAS, *Mary Most Holy: The Paradise of God Revealed to Men*, op. cit., p.123.

²² Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.121.

²³ Cf. ROSCHINI, op. cit., p.255.

²⁴ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 9/1/1982.

²⁵ Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.136.

²⁶ Cf. ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. *Sermo in Nativitate Beatæ Mariæ Virginis*, n.7-8.



Children of Mary's Merciful Initiative

Throughout the centuries, the Blessed Virgin has progressively poured out her help and favour upon the Church. Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary seems to present the apex of her mercy to a sinful humanity, in order to bring about a marvellous conversion within it.

✠ Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

The writings of Sister Maria de Ágreda,¹ in which she records the supernatural revelations she received, tell of many special concepts contained in the Book of Revelation, expressed symbolically and as yet undiscovered, concerning Our Lady's relationship with the Apostles, especially St. John the Evangelist.

When the time comes for theologians to understand the mysteries of the Apocalypse in this regard, they will come to know the full treasure contained in Revelation, and the Magisterium of the Church will be able to exercise its authority in its fullness regarding this new panorama. Although this idea of Mary of Ágreda is not proven merely by her affirmation, there is nothing heterodox about it. There will presumably come a time when this will be fully disclosed, and then this knowledge will be completed.

Such a hypothesis is in line with what St. Louis Grignion de Montfort states regarding the progress of the mystery of grace. There is a devotion to Our Lady that existed throughout the ages which, at a certain point, began to take on greater significance, as desired by her. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin



Matheus Rambo

The Immaculate Heart of Mary - Private collection

develops this mystery in souls, and it is its triumph that brings an end to the reign of the devil and establishes the true Reign of Mary.

There are certain conjectures – very orthodox, serious and sound, though not yet entirely clear – through which one can gain some understanding of this mysterious action of Our Lady in souls.

An inexhaustible source of compassion for the sinner

There was a time when I was reading about devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary – including encyclicals on the topic – in order to answer the following question: in essence, what is devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and, extensively, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary? We know that the object of this devotion is the Heart as a part of His human body, or of her immaculate body, but it is, above all, a symbol of a spiritual nature. So, of what does the reality it represents consist?

Briefly, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus considers what we might call the spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, His wisdom and

There is a devotion to Our Lady that existed throughout the ages which, at a certain point, began to take on greater significance, at her own request

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, intended especially for the latter times, brings with it a new form of clemency

holiness; in other words, a doctrine not merely as conceived, but as personified and lived. He manifests Himself as loving towards mankind, desiring to diffuse Himself, to attract, to win over. In the face of a sinful humanity, His greatest triumph is not justice, by which He sends the sinner to hell, but clemency, by which He redeems him. God's greatest triumph lies in forgiving and converting.

Thus, we understand this aspect of the devotion, which is so prominent in popular piety and emphasized in numerous documents of the Holy Church: the Heart of Jesus as the source of mercy.

Concomitantly, we understand what the Immaculate Heart of Mary is.

The Hearts of Jesus and Mary: a new plenitude of graces

However, when one pays close attention to these two invocations, one notices certain intricacies in which some developments can already be sensed, but which have not yet been fully explained.

There is a kind of greater and more complete communication of Our Lord with those who venerate His Heart, than with those who worship Him in the other mysteries. Just as there is a fuller form of communication from Our Lady with those who venerate her Immaculate Heart.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary - Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima Basilica, Cotia (Brazil)

Authors who write about these two devotions assert that they are intended for the latter times, the conclusion of the Church's history, the final outpourings of mercy.

Thus, drawing on the thought of St. Louis Grignon de Montfort, one gets the impression of an increase in grace that operates through wonders of benevolence, progressively and with greater intensity from the moment these two devotions were revealed to mankind. It is, therefore, a further step in the mystery of grace being manifested. It would seem that this new form of mercy has been directed towards a humanity in a state of extreme putrefaction— almost rendered unfit, due to vice, to actually attain holiness – and whose moral decay would indicate the proximity of the end of the world.

Our Lady's merciful and transformative initiative

I see, within our Movement,² in those who strive to be good, the struggle between a persistent grace – inefably steadfast – and a vast array of opposing resistances: refusals, irresolution, and infidelities of every kind and degree.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a gradual victory of Our Lady, marked by the way people progress spiritually.



In my view, this would be inexplicable without this help given to the weak and the little ones, which corresponds to the motto of the Church of Philadelphia, in the Book of Revelation: weak, yet faithful (cf. Rev 3:8). It is a grace that sustains in faithfulness those who are very weak.

Upon the poorest and most crippled of humanity, continuous graces descend – the most undeserved – which, nevertheless, form a stream of undeniable virtue. So many cases of magnificent moral regeneration, in which one is transformed from a street urchin into the very model of piety and righteousness! It is impossible not to recognize an immense influx of grace, something which is above all supernatural, comparable to the great divine acts recorded in the history of the Church.

All of this – truly disproportionate to what is happening today – points to an immense grace, founded entirely

on devotion to Our Lady. If our relationship with her were to diminish by even a single millimetre – if such things could be measured in millimetres – our Movement would fall apart right now. I have the impression that there would not be enough time to finish my conference. Such is the degree to which fidelity and perseverance spring from our bond with the Mother of God and thrive on her encouragement.

In this sense, there is such mercy that I am led to consider this as a sign foretelling the superabundant aid which, in the Reign of Mary, will bind men to her. Today, naturally, this bond is still in its infancy, in its first stirrings, in its initial movements, but it exists.

Union with the Virgin Mary is to the other virtues as the engine is to the airplane, drawing everything else along in its wake: it is the “engine” of all virtues; when in motion, everything moves forward.

“The Little Way” and the dawn of the Reign of Mary

I feel I cannot conclude this talk without saying a few words about St. Therese of the Child Jesus and “the Little Way”, in connection with this.

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, in her *Story of a Soul*, makes several references to a new intensity of God’s love, so powerful that it will gather those who are small, insignificant, and weak in various senses of the word, and lead them to holiness.

It is, then, a greater outpouring of divine grace, victoriously, of God’s benevolence in being content with little to accomplish great things; a greater

manifestation of the efficacy of supernatural aid, drawing greatness from that which is small.

St. Therese states that she offered herself as a victim in a holocaust to God’s merciful love, to consecrate a path that countless souls should follow. She, in Heaven, would spend her eternity showering the earth with a rain of rose petals.

It is clear that the rose petals signify temporal graces, as she grants them, but they are meant to lead to spiritual ones; that greater love of God of which we have just spoken.

There must be a connection between her hope for the growth of God’s merciful love and the dawn of the Reign of Mary, even though St. Therese did not express herself in those terms.

The progressive advance of merciful love in the world should be made along the path opened by her. Her death is certainly related, in some way, to its outpouring.

The “little way” turns out to be, in various regards – when studied in all its aspects – the path by which the little souls of a decadent humanity are rescued by mercy and led to holiness. It is, therefore, the specific spirituality of those who wish to be children and slaves of Our Lady, and to progress in virtue.

I have the impression that some of Our Lady’s most chosen souls, from Elijah until the end of the world, received and will receive this grace. But from individual cases it will become a collective phenomenon when the

Reign of Mary comes. ✠

Taken, with adaptations for written language, from: *Conference*. São Paulo, 11/7/1967



Dr. Plinio in 1986

Magazine archive

*The “little way”
is the path by
which the humble
souls of a decadent
humanity will be
rescued by mercy
and led to holiness*

¹ A Conceptionist nun, mystical writer and abbess of the convent of Ágreda, in Spain (1602-1665).

² Dr. Plinio founded the Brazilian Society for the Defence of Tradition, Family and Property in 1960.



Hail Mary, Full of Grace

St. Thomas Aquinas’s childhood was not without a singular episode of “disobedience”... Once, as a little child, he happened to come across a small scroll. Refusing stubbornly to let go of it, he wept bitterly as attempts were made to take it from him by force. His poor nanny even resigned herself to bathing him with his little hand clenched... Later, his mother’s skill managed to uncover its mysterious contents. Two words: “Hail Mary”.

This simple incident, the account of which was gathered from family members by his first and principal biographer, William of Tocco, reveals the reason why the Angelic Doctor achieved brilliant victories amidst the myriad trials faced in this vale of tears. He knew how to live out what he preached when commenting on the Angelic Salutation: “in every danger thou canst find a refuge in this same glorious Virgin” (*Commentary on the Hail Mary*, a.1). To Mary apply the words of the wise man, for from her “hang a thousand bucklers” (Sg 4:4), as a remedy for manifold evils. Likewise, the Mother of God is a help in every work of perfection: “in me is all hope of life and of virtue” (Ecclus 24:25).

The saints possess grace not only for their own salvation, but also for that of many others. How many have been able to attain Heaven through the intercession of the founders of Reli-

gious Orders, such as St. Benedict, St. Dominic, and St. Teresa of Jesus! Yet, above them all stands Our Lady, who has secured salvation for *all* mankind, for She, being truly *the* “full of grace”,

repelled every sin during her life. On the other hand, while every saint is distinguished by some particular virtue – be it humility, fortitude, mercy, etc. – in Mary’s life we have “an example of all virtues” (a.1).

We find the virtue of humility exemplified in St. Francis of Assisi or St. Martin de Porres; nevertheless, in the Blessed Virgin we discover its fullness, for God “hath regarded the humility of His handmaid” (Lk 1:48). While in St. Agnes and St. Lucy we have models of purity and virginity, we encounter their pinnacle in Mary, who said “I know not man” (Lk 1:34). For this reason, She was identified with the *tota pulchra*, the all-beautiful one (cf. Sg 4:7), in whom there is not the slightest blemish.

Indeed, Our Lady was and always will be called blessed by all generations (cf. Lk 1:48), not only by men, but also by the Angels, beginning with St. Gabriel who, bowing at the Annunciation, gave her the title par excellence: “Full of grace” (Lk 1:28).

By these words he meant to say: “I bow to Thee because thou dost surpass me in fulness of grace” (a.1).

We, weak sinners, must learn to “disobey” like little Thomas, so that we may cling to this impregnable “tower of David” (Sg 4:4). In dangers, in anxieties, in doubts, let us always turn to Our Lady, even if only by uttering her name: Mary! ✠



May the Angelic Salutation be our protection and consolation in anguish and necessity, just as for St. Thomas it became a banner, shield and fortress in his battles

Little Thomas receives a manuscript with the Angelic Salutation from Heaven - St. Dominic Convent, Lima

gave birth to the Saviour of the human race.

Furthermore, Aquinas explains, God grants us grace “for two purposes, namely, the performance of good deeds and the avoidance of evil. As regards both, the Blessed Virgin received grace in the most perfect degree” (a.1). Indeed, She was not only preserved from original sin, but also



Archetype of the Mystical Body of Christ

While it is true that Our Lady, as Daughter of God, is a member of the Church, She is also the Mother and Queen of this same Church, as well as the Mother of all its members, beginning with its Head



✦ Miguel Ferrari

The whole is worth more than the sum of its parts.” This well-known maxim is considered indisputable, a universal philosophical principle.

Illustrious doctors have used it to describe the relationship between Our Lady and the Church, asserting that the Blessed Virgin, as a supremely excellent member of the Church, is less important than the Mystical Body of Christ – the “total Christ,” in the Augustinian expression. A part, in effect, could not be worth more than the whole that includes it.

Among the defenders of the above stated principle is the Doctor of Hippo himself, who stated: “Holy Mary, blessed Mary! However, the Church is better than the Virgin Mary. Why? Because Mary is a portion of the Church, a holy member, an excellent member, a supereminent member, but a member of the total Body. If She belongs to the total Body, the Body is greater than each of its members.”²¹

Data venia, is it really possible that such a question can be resolved in such simple terms?

A part or the reason for being?

As an initial argument, let us propose an example: imagine a stupendous

royal palace, adorned with precious paintings and valuable ornaments, rich tapestries and priceless furniture. The noble building, obviously, is not uninhabited: a large number of cooks, servants, guards, footmen and pages serve an expressive court of barons, viscounts, counts, marquesses and dukes, who, in turn, orbit around a powerful king, flanked by his queen.

This palace forms a varied ensemble, but can we affirm that the majestic couple is only a part of this ensemble, or rather, is the castle with its inhabitants merely a portion of what could be called “royal power”? In short, if we remove the king and queen, what is the meaning of the existence of the castle and the court?

It can be observed, therefore, that some elements, although included within a given reality, cannot be considered mere parts of a whole, since they constitute the very reason for being of that totality. Thus, although they are *in* an ensemble, their place is more properly *above* it.

Now, such a consideration is perfectly applicable to the role of Our Lady in relation to the Mystical Body of Christ. If it is true that Mary Most Holy, as the Daughter of God, is a member of the Church, She is also Mother and Queen

of that same Church, in addition to being Mother of all its members, beginning with its Head.

Inseparable in the eyes of God

Can we, accordingly, affirm that the Church is a reality distinct from Mary and, moreover, inferior to her?

Although, from the point of view expressed above, this is sustainable, it is worth remembering the happy words of Blessed Isaac, Abbot of the Monastery of Stella: “In the divinely inspired Scriptures, what is generally attributed to the Church, virgin and mother, applies particularly to the Virgin Mary. [...] And when the text refers to one of them, it can be largely applied indistinctly and indifferently to both.”²²

It is clear from this passage that, in the eyes of God, they are inseparable. And this for several reasons.

Firstly, it is worth remembering that the Church was born, so to speak, in Mary: in effect, the Head of the Mystical Body was begotten in her, and it is also through her that all the children of God are begotten in Baptism. Moreover, the Mystical Spouse of Christ came into the world from the wounded side of the Crucified One, and at that

moment, the only soul that kept the gift of faith alive was His Holy Mother. It could therefore be said that, in its inception, the community of the faithful was constituted by Our Lady alone.

Furthermore, by fulfilling God's will in everything and being a shining example of all virtues, the Blessed Virgin became the exemplary cause, the *typus* of the Church.³

Mary, the ideal of perfection for the Church

It follows that, for the Church to better realize her ideal of perfection, she needs to become ever more like the Mother of God. The *Catechism* rightly affirms that, when discussing the origin, mission, and destiny of the Church, there is no more profitable exercise than turning our gaze to Mary in order to “contemplate what the Church already is in her mystery on her own ‘pilgrimage of faith,’ and what she will be in the homeland at the end of her journey.”⁴

Thus, if we hope for a time when Our Lady will effectively reign in hearts – the Reign of Mary announced by St. Louis Grignion de Montfort⁵ – it is imperative that the Church, in every aspect of her life, comes to reflect the holiness of the Immaculate Virgin.

A certain medieval theologian even stated that the Eternal Word came into the world attracted and enticed by the sweet aroma of Mary's holiness: “This sweet perfume enchanted the only



Gustavo Krahl

The Church will draw her Divine Spouse to herself, as long as she reflects the Mother of God, perfectly and completely

Immaculate Conception - Private collection

Son of God and completely captivated Him! And He did not delay, but was immediately enticed and carried away from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of the Virgin.”⁶

Now, if throughout the world the Holy Church exhales the sublime fragrances of Marian holiness, will Jesus

Christ not feel Himself drawn again – albeit in a different way – to the earth? Undoubtedly. The Church will draw her Divine Spouse closer to herself as long as she perfectly and completely reflects the Mother of God, who can properly be called the “perfect Church, the Church fully realized in her earthly and eschatological dimension.”⁷

The whole must move towards the part

In conclusion, it is worth returning to the question posed at the beginning of the article: is the whole greater than the part?

In the case at hand, the answer defies human standards: it is up to the whole – the Church – to somehow identify itself with its very special part, that is, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Only in this way will the totality be complete and reach its own pinnacle.

How do these considerations apply to us, children of the Church and children of Mary? In everything and for everything: *Totus tuus* – I am all thine, O Mary! Our life of perfection, in effect, cannot be limited to the simple practice of virtues. It is necessary to seek to live every second of our existence for Mary, with Mary and in Mary, so that as soon as possible we may glimpse the transfigured face of the Holy Church, *fully* configured with the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God and ours. ✠

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE. *Sermo XXV*, n.7: PL 46, 938.

³ Cf. CCC 967.

² BLESSED ISAAC DE STELLA. *Sermo LI. In Assumptione Beatæ Mariæ*: PL 194, 1863.

⁴ CCC 972.
⁵ Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, n.217. In:

Euvres Complètes. Paris: Du Seuil, 1966, p.634-635.

⁶ ACHARD OF ST. VICTOR. *Sermão na Festa da Natividade da Bem-Aventurada Virgem Maria*, n.1. In: *Lumen*

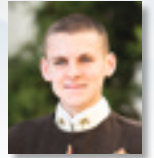
Veritatis. Year XIV. No. 56 (July-Sept., 2022), p.496.

⁷ BENI DOS SANTOS, Benedito. *Nossa Senhora e a Igreja*. In: *Lumen Veritatis*. Year XVI. No. 64 (July-Sept., 2024), p.23.



The Queen of History

The axis of history is the Incarnation of the Word. And the Word was made flesh in the womb of Mary. Through her, therefore, the Most High took the reins of history in hand and continues to hold them.



✠ Santiago Ignacio Ramirez

Chess has its mysteries. How can it be that a knight can perform an Olympic leap over a rook? That bishops can only glide along on squares of a single colour? That a pawn, after quite a dash, can even become a queen, right under the nose of the astonished opponent king?

Further: is it not inconceivable that the queen possesses powers and proficiency superior to all other pieces, even to those of her royal spouse? The latter, constrained by his grandeur, advances solemnly one square at a time; the former, driven by some unknown delirium of zeal for the monarch, sweeps across the battlefield from one end to the other in a single move, becoming the bane of the enemy and the salvation of her soldiers. How to understand this? Perhaps by considering chess as a metaphor for the way God intervenes in history...

Divine Providence may well have allowed men to bestow such importance upon the chess queen solely so that she might remind us remotely of another: the undoubted and invincible Queen of History, Mary Most Holy.

Truly Queen

Daughter of the Eternal Father, Mother of the King of the Universe, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Our Lady is Queen of History not merely nominally, but truly.

She is at the origin of the great milestones in the chronology of salvation: in the stable, when She gave birth to the Divine Child who would divide history in two; in the Upper Room, when She attracted the Paraclete at Pentecost; at the epicentre of the Council of Ephesus, marking the dogmatic definitions that would

establish the doctrine of the nascent Church; in the skies over Lepanto and at the Battle of Vienna, watching over Christendom; in the Mantle of Guadalupe, as a pledge of her maternal presence in the New World; in the Miraculous Medal and the grotto of Lourdes, calling a wayward humanity to penance and prayer...

And God, like the chess king, majestic and sovereign, takes pleasure in seeing her present in human history, triumphing and reigning.

But in what sense is Mary Queen of History? What is the centre of History? What, ultimately, is History?

The “*unum*” of History

According to a clear definition given by Dr. Plinio, History is “a narrative that has the same protagonist and interconnected themes, and whose action is continuous throughout the ages.”¹

Someone who set out, for example, to write the history of a hotel, as an institution, narrating only what occurred transitorily in its four hundred rooms, would be unsuccessful in his endeavour, as there is no continuity be-

Perhaps God allowed men to invest the chess queen with such importance so that she might remind us remotely of another, the Queen of History

tween the events nor any relationship between the characters.

On the contrary, one can speak of the history of the Brazilian nation, of Philosophy, of languages and, above all, of the History – with a capital “H” – of humanity, by virtue of the aforementioned continuity of agents and themes.

Indeed, there is an *unum* that links all men, from the dawn of their existence on earth until the Last Judgement. History thus appears as a cathedral which, although composed of many stones, forms a single monument. It is the “edifice” designed by God before the ages to serve as a throne for His cornerstone (cf. Eph 2:19): the King of creation and Lord of the ages, Jesus Christ.

Writing in golden letters upon the divine “draft”

That being said, it can be affirmed that the axis of History is the Incarnation of the Word in Mary’s womb. It was through her that the Most High took the reins of History with human hands, and it is through her that He brings His great conquests to fruition.

By a sublime mystery, her relationship with the unfolding of events began even before She was conceived. Yes, for even in Paradise, the Immaculate One was present as a promise.

With the disobedience of our first parents, God revealed that His plan would continue through a Virgin, who would crush the head of the Serpent (cf. Gn 3:15). Creation thus received its central theme: the struggle between good and evil. And at the head of the army of light stands Our Lady, She who “knows God’s intentions regarding history.”²²

Nevertheless, this action of Mary has a peculiar characteristic. As Dr. Plinio stated, the Most High wished to create “a creature who is entirely human, yet abso-

lutely perfect; [...] who is always in a position to refine, at least in part, what men do and, so to speak, to correct – if the word *correct* were not inappropriate – to reform, to revise, according to the plans of God’s mercy, that which His justice would do.”²³

In this way, the Creator ordained that, upon the “draft” of His original plan entrusted to mankind, Our Lady would inscribe the true History in golden letters.

The Creator ordained that, upon the “draft” of His original plan entrusted to mankind, Our Lady would inscribe the true history in golden letters

Mary’s presence throughout the centuries

We will not mention, in this article, all the occasions on which She has made herself present in human history, in order to demonstrate that the Mother of Jesus guides events with gentle firmness. That would be like writing an encyclopaedia... But let us briefly recall some of her most decisive acts.

In December 1531, the Mother of all peoples appeared in New Spain, now Mexico, to the indigenous man Juan Diego, revealing a deep affection for the American lands and their native peoples. One of the main symbols of the apparition is the *nahui ollin*, which the four-petalled flower depicted directly over the Virgin’s womb refers to and which, for the indigenous peoples, embodied the notion of the “centre of History”. Through this emblematic manifestation, Mary wished to express her desire to make the New Continent the dwelling place of her Most Holy Son and the heart of her reign.



“Annunciation”, by Gentile da Fabriano - Vatican Pinacoteca; on the previous page, “Crowning of the Virgin”, by Agnolo Gaddi - National Gallery, London

Reproduction



Juan Carlos Villegómez

Most Holy Queen Mary of the Dawn - Banamex Palace of Culture, Mexico City

In the Old Continent, the apparitions of the Most Holy Virgin multiplied in the 19th century, a time of unprecedented rebellions against God’s plans, fuelled chiefly by the French Revolution.

In Paris, when She spoke to St. Catherine Labouré in 1830, Our Lady announced that “the whole world will be shaken by calamities of every kind”;⁴ nevertheless, with abundant mercy, She entrusted the nun with the Miraculous Medal, which played the role of an invaluable weapon during that historic juncture.

At La Salette, in France, Our Lady of Sorrows lamented once more, in 1846, over the decline of society and the infamies of the clergy, and foretold

*On the chessboard
where the legions of
virtue clash with the
hosts of sin, Mary
is our assurance of
checkmate against the
prince of darkness*

a chastisement whereby God would strike humanity with both natural disasters and continental wars.

Finally, in Lourdes, the Mother of God appeared to St. Bernadette Sou-

birous in 1858, announcing: “I am the Immaculate Conception.” These words marked the beginning of the countless miracles through which She would show to the world the power of her queenly sceptre.

Moving into the 20th century, at two opposite points of the globe, in Fatima, Portugal, and in Akita, Japan, Our Lady shone forth as a sun of hope, promising the salvation of souls and a great period of peace if devotion to her Immaculate Heart were established in the world. This was, and indeed remains to be, the axis around which the gravest and most universal problems of mankind revolve. Mary also warned that great punishments would befall humanity if it did not convert: “The good will be martyred,” prophesied the Queen of Peace, “the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated.”⁵

The checkmate of all History

We could list innumerable apparitions and interventions by the Blessed Virgin Mary. But let us pause here and turn our gaze to our Sovereign.

We, the soldiers who fight under the banner of light in the Virgin’s army, are at the service of her who writes over God’s blueprint in golden letters. With this panorama in mind, what enemies are we to fear?

On the chessboard where legions of virtue clash with the hosts of sin, we have the mighty Queen on our side. As the warriors of such a Lady – even if mere pawns – we know that She will defend us. And, beyond our personal battlefield, we have in Mary the certainty of the checkmate against the prince of darkness and of the final victory of the Holy Church. ✦

¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. Nossa Senhora, Rainha da História [Our Lady, Queen of History]. In: *Dr. Plínio*.

São Paulo. Year XIV. No.164 (Nov., 2011), p.6.

² Idem, p.12.

³ Idem, *ibidem*.

⁴ BRIOSCHI, SDB, Giuseppe. *La medaglia miracolosa*. Camerata Picena: Shalom, 2005, p.25.

⁵ WALSH, William Thomas. *Our Lady of Fatima*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947, p.83.



The Predestination of the Mother of God and Ours

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§488 “God sent forth His Son” (Gal 4:4), but to “prepare a body for Him,” He wanted the free co-operation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the Mother of His Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, “a Virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin’s name was Mary” (Lk 1:26-27).

This paragraph of the Catechism, entitled The Predestination of Mary, presents a series of biblical Marian attributes, focusing on the privilege of her Divine Motherhood.

Of the four Marian dogmas – Perpetual Virginity, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption and Divine Motherhood – the latter is the most sublime, as it is the foundation for the others. During the Council of Ephesus, held in the year 431, the Church defined that the Virgin Mary is truly the Mother of God, since She conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and gave birth, according to the flesh, to Him who possesses two natures – human and divine – united in a single Person, the Eternal Word.

This theological framework, which the Church has not yet grasped conclusively, makes it clear that the Father willed to predestine Our Lady, from all eternity, for the fulfilment of the sublime and infinitely great work of the Incarnation. This is an ineffable dignity, confirmed by St. Thomas Aquinas¹ when he teaches that everything the Creator made could have been better, with three exceptions: the humanity of Christ, because it is hypostatically united to the Person of the Son; the Most Holy Virgin, because She is the Mother of God; and the

beatific vision, because it consists in the vision of God Himself.

In light of these considerations, it can be better understood why St. Louis Grignion de Montfort² emphasizes that the mystery of the Incarnation is central to the practice of total consecration of oneself to Jesus Christ, through the hands of Mary.

The Incarnation shows that God the Father, although He had no need of Our Lady, chose to make use of her to give the world the Saviour. The Almighty could have brought about the

Redemption of humanity in another way. However, His infinitely wise plan had contemplated the Incarnation of the Only-begotten Son from all eternity. Thus, the divine design of choosing and predestining Mary to be the Mother of God is perfectly accomplished, even though our human understanding is incapable of assimilating its entire significance.

From this perspective, it follows that the Blessed Virgin’s “yes” at the Annunciation was the most splendid and momentous decision in history, dividing it into two parts: before and after Christ. At the same time, it was an eloquent manifestation of her fullness of grace, love and self-surrender: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38).

Every believer is likewise called to say “yes” to the universal call to holiness. To this end, there is nothing better than to follow the example of her whom all generations will call blessed, for in her the Almighty has worked wonders (cf. Lk 1:48–49). In us too, through grace, He can do the same. ✠



Before the beginning of time, Mary was predestined to carry out God’s sublime work: the Incarnation of the Word

“Madonna and Child,” by Barnaba da Modena – Galleria Estense, Modena (Italy)

¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I, q.25, a.6, ad 4.

² Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to Mary*, n.16; 139; 243.



Gehazi's "Reward"

No one expected the outcome of this story, neither Gehazi nor the reader... Above all, God expected a different conclusion.



✠ Fr. Roberto Torres, EP

Enveloped in grandeur and mystery, the prophets are key figures in history, and it is difficult to find souls comparable to them. However, the Divine Craftsman often allows men of little virtue to appear alongside such giants of faith, perhaps to make divine power and its supremacy over human misery shine in a special way...

This is, for example, what happened in the time of Elisha, disciple of the great Elijah.

Naaman, the Syrian general

It all began with the arrival of a caravan from Damascus to the territory of Israel. The imposing entourage was led by none other than the most prestigious general of the king of Syria: Naaman. The monarch of the chosen people feared it was a trap that would justify a military campaign against his domains, but that was not the case. The reason for the unexpected excursion was the terrible disease that the officer had contracted and from which he hoped for a cure.

The Second Book of Kings narrates that Naaman suffered from leprosy and was advised by a young slave girl – Jewish by birth

and religion – to seek out the prophet Elisha, “the man of God” (5:8), in Israel, who could cure him. To this end, Naaman obtained permission to undertake the journey and departed, armed with letters of recommendation from the Syrian sovereign, begging the neighbouring kingdom for the unusual favour.

The unfolding of the story, with its manifestations of faith and scepticism, as well as the episode of Naaman’s healing in the waters of the Jordan, are widely known, as the liturgical cycle contemplates them annually. However, it is quite likely that not many recall the subsequent episodes, narrated below.

In the shadow of Elisha, Gehazi

Naaman emerged healed from the waters of the Jordan. The miracle had occurred by order of the prophet Elisha, without the latter even having spoken personally to the general, for he had done so through a servant.

Gehazi – as Scripture calls him – was this trusted assistant of the providential man and the witness of the great wonders he performed. He had certainly been present when Elisha instructed a widow to fill numerous jars with the oil that miraculously flowed from a single bottle, in order to pay the debts of her deceased husband (cf. 2 Kgs 4:1-7). On another occasion, it was at his suggestion that Elisha prophesied the birth of a son to a certain Shunammite woman who had favoured him (cf. 2 Kgs 4:12-17). And, years



Gehazi was the trusted assistant of the providential man and a witness to the great wonders he performed

“Elijah and the Shunammite woman”, by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout - Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest



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Seeing that his master had refused the presents of Naaman, Gehazi – who loved riches more than Elisha – ran after the caravan, and demand payment for a cure he had not performed...

“Naaman and Elijah”, by Abraham van Dijck

later, he beheld the resurrection of that same boy, after being struck down by a sudden illness (cf. 2 Kgs 4:18-37).

Undoubtedly Gehazi had been with Elisha when he saved his fellow prophets from death – or at least from terrible indigestion – by neutralizing a noxious pottage with the simple gesture of throwing meal into the pot (cf. 2 Kgs 4:38-41). And, even more admirable, he was the one who, at his master’s command, distributed twenty barley loaves that multiplied to the point of feeding a multitude (cf. 2 Kings 4:42-44)!

The humble potentate and the greedy servant

However, it is not enough to live in the shadow of a prophet to become holy like him... It is necessary to admire him with all one’s heart, imitate his works, and practise his teachings. As will become clear, Gehazi was far from observing these requirements, for

his aspirations were diametrically opposed to those of his master.

Sacred History recounts that, after being miraculously healed, Naaman presented himself once again at Elisha’s door to humbly thank him for his benefits. This time, the prophet received him in person and, refusing the rich gifts he insisted on offering, allowed the general to take with him a certain quantity of soil from the country, for he, even though living among pagans, had decided from then on to worship only the one true God.

As the Syrian caravan moved away, Gehazi, who loved riches more than Elisha, thought to himself: “See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him, and get something from him” (2 Kgs 5:20). And he set off quickly, to appropriate goods he did not deserve and demand payment for a cure he had not performed...

Ultimately, such a dishonest attempt could only end in failure.

A leper is healed and a healthy man made leprous...

Upon seeing Gehazi running after his caravan, Naaman stopped to see what he wanted. The deceit displayed by the servant is surprising: “My master has sent me to say, ‘There have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets; pray, give them a talent of silver and two festal garments’” (2 Kgs 5:22). Through this fraud, Gehazi obtained from the general – who, moved by gratitude and generosity, suspected nothing – everything he asked for and even an extra talent...

Satisfied with the success of the operation, he returned to his service in the presence of Elisha, having first taken care to hide the gifts he had acquired, in order to deceive the prophet, concealing his sin. This naive trick,



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If Gehazi had been faithful, he would have contemplated the wonders yet to be wrought in Elisha's presence

“Elijah reproves Gehazi”, by Lambert Jacobsz - Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston (Ontario)

however, was immediately unmasked by the man of God:

“Where have you been, Gehazi?”

“Your servant went nowhere,” he replied.

“Did I not go with you in spirit when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, menservants and maid-servants? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you, and to your descendants for ever.”

And this is what happened: “So he went out from his presence a leper, as white as snow” (2 Kgs 5:27).

Punishment for some, reward for others

Everything suggests that, once a leper, Gehazi withdrew from Elisha's service. Scripture, sparse in details, does not allude to this particular fine point; what is certain is that his name does not appear again in the prophet's story. Instead, we see him later conversing with King Joram (cf. 2 Kgs 8:4-5) – not a person, incidentally, of

virtuous character – and then the sacred texts never mention him again.

What would have been his fate if he had imitated the unpretentiousness, righteousness, and holiness of his master? We do not need to meditate much to obtain an answer, for the Book of Kings itself presents it to us in the following chapter.

It happened, amidst the conflicts between Israel and Syria, that Elisha repeatedly revealed to the king of Israel the exact position of the enemy troops, their plans, and ambushes. Discovering that these revelations were not the work of a traitor, but rather of the prophet, the Syrian sovereign decided to arrest him.

So, one morning Elisha awoke and saw his city surrounded by “horses and chariots and a great army” (2 Kgs 6:14), who came in search of him. At the sight of this spectacle, his servant – who was certainly no longer Gehazi – exclaimed in terror:

“Alas, my master! What shall we do?”

“Fear not,” Elisha replied. “for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

Considering Gehazi's unworthy attitude in far less demanding circumstances, it is conceivable that, in such a danger, he might have fled from Elisha's company, preferring to save himself rather than trust in prophecy... The new servant, on the contrary, remained with the providential man when the situation seemed hopeless.

Although he did not fully understand his master's statement, he saw in his eyes the certainty that only those who fight for God can convey; and he believed. In return for such an act of trust, “Elisha prayed, and said, ‘O Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see.’ So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kgs 6:15-17). His weakness was surmounted by devotion to the prophet, and his earthly vision became supernatural.

If Gehazi had been faithful, perhaps he would have been with Elisha in this wonderful episode. He would have contemplated the legions of warrior Angels, and observed the adversaries blinded by divine power; he would have witnessed the fulfilment of impressive prophecies in the midst of the war against the Syrians (cf. 2 Kgs 6–7); he might perhaps have witnessed the prophet's last moments, closing his eyes to this life while he opened them to eternity...

Whom shall we imitate?

Throughout history, God's wise and eternal plans, despite the recalcitrance of men, always come to pass.

It is up to us to choose whether we will be Elisha or Gehazi; whether our memory will be a blessing for posterity, or whether, on the contrary, it will bear the marks of curse or oblivion; whether we will work for the execution of divine plans, or whether we will figure in them only as a contemptible blot...

The choice is in our hands! ✚

...how the *Salve Regina* originated?

From one end of the earth to the other, no devout Catholic fails to raise to Heaven the most beautiful prayer dedicated to the Virgin Mother of God: the *Salve Regina*. What is its origin?

Although the earliest reliable records of the Marian hymn date only to the end of the 11th century, authorship is most frequently attributed to Blessed Hermannus Contractus, also known as Herman of Reichenau (1013–1054). According to other sources, however, Ademar of Monteuil, Bishop of Le Puy-en-Velay, is said to have composed it, invoking the Virgin's special protection on the occasion of the First Crusade in 1096.

Herman was sent by his parents to a Benedictine monastery as an oblate, where he received an excellent education. He suffered from a form of paralysis – *contractus* means “lame” in medieval Latin – but despite his frail health he became a dedicated



Apparition of Our Lady to Blessed Hermannus, by Josef Ferdinand Fromiller - Abbot of Ossiach (Austria)

polymath over the years: he was a theologian, astronomer, poet, mathematician, physicist and musician, as well as abbot of Reichenau Abbey in southern Germany. In the twilight of his days, having lost his sight and caught between anguish and hope, he is said to have composed the hymn of total loving confidence in Mary: the *Salve Regina*.

At Christmas 1146, St. Bernard of Clairvaux was at Speyer Cathedral on a papal mission when he heard the choir intone the invocation in praise of the Blessed Virgin. When the chant ceased, a reverent silence reigned in the sacred precinct, and the Saint himself added: “*O clemens! O pia! O dulcis Virgo Maria!* – O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.” From then on, the threefold supplication became an integral part of the prayer.

Over time, the Marian hymn gained prominence, particularly from 1218 onwards, when it was adopted as the final antiphon at Compline in Cistercian monasteries. Other religious orders chose this supplicatory prayer for various occasions: in processions, at the end of Masses, at funerals... Therefore, wherever we may be in this valley of tears, we must not miss the opportunity to implore the Queen of Heaven to turn her “eyes of mercy” towards each one of us! ❄

...why a dog breed was named after a Saint?

In the mid-11th century, St. Bernard of Menthon founded the Hospitalier Congregation of Great St. Bernard, made up of canons regular, with the aim of establishing a monastery and providing lodgings for pilgrims crossing the Alps via the perilous pass between Valais, in Switzerland, and the Aosta Valley, in Italy.

Between the 1660s and 1670s, the canons began to use Alpine mastiffs for guarding and companionship. Over time, they realized that these dogs could detect people buried in the snow by their keen sense of smell and, when this happened, would return to the monastery to alert the monks.

Later, the rescue system became so well organized that, between 1790 and 1810, Napoleon and 250,000 soldiers crossed this same Alpine pass, now known as the St. Bernard Pass, without suffering a single casualty. One of the dogs, Barry, is known to have rescued more than forty people in the early 19th century. It is recorded that, by the end of the same century, the dogs cared for by the monks had saved more than two thousand lives.

In the 1880s, to honour the founder of that pilgrims' shelter, the breed's name was standardized as *Saint Bernard*. Then, in 1923, Pius XI proclaimed the Saint of Menthon the patron saint of mountaineers. ❄

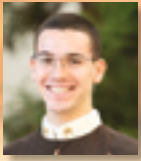


A canon with Saint Bernard dogs - Monastery and hospice of the Congregation of Great St. Bernard, Valais Alps (Switzerland)



Victory or Defeat: It Is in our Hands

The great battle to attain our ultimate goal, beatitude, may result in either a crushing defeat or a magnificent victory. It all depends on our willingness to fight.



Alessandro Tiso ✍



Gustavo Kraij

Clausewitz,¹ the renowned war strategist, asserts that one of the most effective combat manoeuvres consists of triumphing even before the battle begins. How? By taking from the enemy the determination to fight, whether by the tenacity of the resistance or – more effectively – by the threat of an overwhelming onslaught. In other words, the one who robs the adversary of the desire for combat, the courage to persevere, and the hope of victory triumphs without even advancing.

And it is using this stratagem that hell schemes against humanity today. A consummate deceiver, the devil has sufficient experience to perceive the advantage of such a tactic, for through it he has conquered the world from the original fall to the present day.

Exchanging Heaven for earth

“Humanity has material goods as its great dream, its great hope. And whoever turns their back on eternal and spiritual goods, seeking fulfillment in earthly matters, loses all true hope and ends up falling into despondency,”² observes Msgr. João. Now, what is the relationship between hope and the dichotomy between heavenly and temporal goods?

Man’s ultimate end – replies St. Thomas Aquinas centuries in advance – is beatitude, or happiness. We need only ask ourselves what we hope to gain from the efforts we undertake: the possession of some good, be it real or apparent. Supreme happiness, however, must necessarily encompass *all* joys and last *for ever*. For this reason, concludes the Angelic Doctor, “God alone constitutes man’s happiness.”³ He who does not direct his intentions towards this end will see his hopes dashed, and may fall into despair.

There are two ways in which this can happen. Firstly, “affections being infected with the love of bodily pleasures” leads to a disregard for spiritual realities. Secondly, through “being over downcast,”⁴ man judges the attainment of a benefit which is difficult to attain – in this case, Heaven – as beyond his reach. In other words, the belief that eternal happiness does not exist or that it is impossible to attain are the two reasons that rob one of hope. And of the victory...

“Curing” oneself with poison

Once hope is taken away, what remains? Acedia. Aquinas follows St. John Damascene’s definition in de-

scribing this vice as “‘a crushing sadness’ which produces such a depression in the human spirit that one has no desire to do anything at all. [...] For this reason, acedia entails a certain aversion to action.”⁵ In severe cases, it goes so far as to suppress “the voice, because the voice, more than any external movement, expresses thoughts and desires.”⁶

On the other hand, depression, unlike acedia, is not in itself culpable. Today it is considered an illness whose causes involve a complex interplay of biological, genetic, environmental and psychological factors. Human morality, in turn, can be influenced by this illness, to the extent that it even affects the dominance of judgement.

When this choice of the will excludes the supernatural, bitterness tends to increase: without direction, man will seek to quench his infinite thirst for happiness in sensory pleasures, such as gluttony or lust. The result of this process is that, by indulging in vices and actually experiencing a certain fleeting pleasure, he will always desire more, feeling increasingly unfulfilled: after the sip comes the tumbler; after the tumbler, the bottle; after the bottle, the barrel... and final-

ly – as is well known – comes frustration. It is like treating a patient with the very cause of the illness one is trying to combat.

We are thus faced with two approaches transcending, although not necessarily excluding, clinical methods for dealing with depression. On one hand, there are actions that exacerbate the condition: the unrestrained pursuit of sensual pleasures, particularly those contrary to natural law. On the other, there are approaches that gradually dispel depression: hope placed in divine benefits.

The passion of the soul most harmful to the body

Sacred Scripture reminds us that “sorrow results in death” (Sir 38:18). Conversely, joy prolongs life!

Msgr. João⁷ illustrated this reality by recalling cases of terminally ill patients who, despite the prognosis, exceeded all survival expectations. The doctors, astonished, after a thorough study, identified the cause of those obstinately resilient lives: joy, especially when grounded in spiritual principles.

Indeed, in 2022, an analytical review of two hundred and eight relevant publications was published, highlighting eight studies, which concluded that “Compared to standard/other usual therapies for treating depression, religion-based interventions provide superior effects.”⁸

Furthermore, according to recent studies, depression can cause various health problems, such as an increased risk of stroke, diabetes and obesity, “partly due to metabolic, immuno-inflammatory, autonomic and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis dysregulation.”⁹ To a large extent, this is an effect of sadness, which, “of all the soul’s passions [...] is most harmful to the body.”¹⁰

Is all sadness bad?

Sadness is a passion of the soul and, as such, is neutral in itself.¹¹ Its moral

value therefore depends on its object. For example, feeling sad at the death of a relative or at a crime that has taken place is part of the natural order.

There are occasions, however, when it is not easy to distinguish whether sadness is good or not. We can discern this by its fruits (cf. Mt 7:16): it will be beneficial when it promotes our spiritual life, and harmful when it causes us to regress.

The same may be said of joy. Nothing compares to the holy joy that comes from virtue, whose greatest treasure is a clear conscience, especially after a good Confession. It is the confident joy of one who feels loved in every circumstance.

What a difference, however, between true and false joys! In reality, the latter cannot properly be called joys, for they are fleeting, vile, frustrating...

The victory of our century

Now, the rise of pseudo-joy precedes and heralds the advance of deep sorrow.

The great battle to attain our ultimate goal – beatitude – may result in either a crushing defeat or a magnificent victory.

Defeat will consist in giving up even before fighting, before seeking the heroism of virtue, before experiencing the delights of renouncing transitory goods in favour of those that endure. The dawn of victory, in turn, will be awaiting me after my very first efforts on the path to holiness.

How to win even before the battle begins? By robbing the adversary of its determination to fight. This is the tactic hell uses in its schemes against humanity

“Meditation”, by Claude Monet – Musée d’Orsay, Paris; on the previous page, St. Joan of Arc – Place des Pyramides, Paris

Contrary to what the sedative-preaching world would have us believe, the Christian’s hope consists in the firm conviction that victory, ultimately, belongs to Christ, who shed His Blood from the heights of Calvary to redeem us from sin. Therefore, in the face of the difficulties, sorrows and even illnesses that dampen our spirits, we must always keep our eyes fixed on the Cross, our sole and unshakable hope. ✚

¹ Cf. CLAUSEWITZ, Carl von. *De la guerra*. Barcelona: Obelisco, 2021, p.47.

² CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Homily*. São Paulo, 29/12/2007.

³ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I-II, q.2, a.8.

⁴ Idem, II-II, q.20, a.4.

⁵ Idem, q.35, a.1.

⁶ Idem, I-II, q.35, a.8.

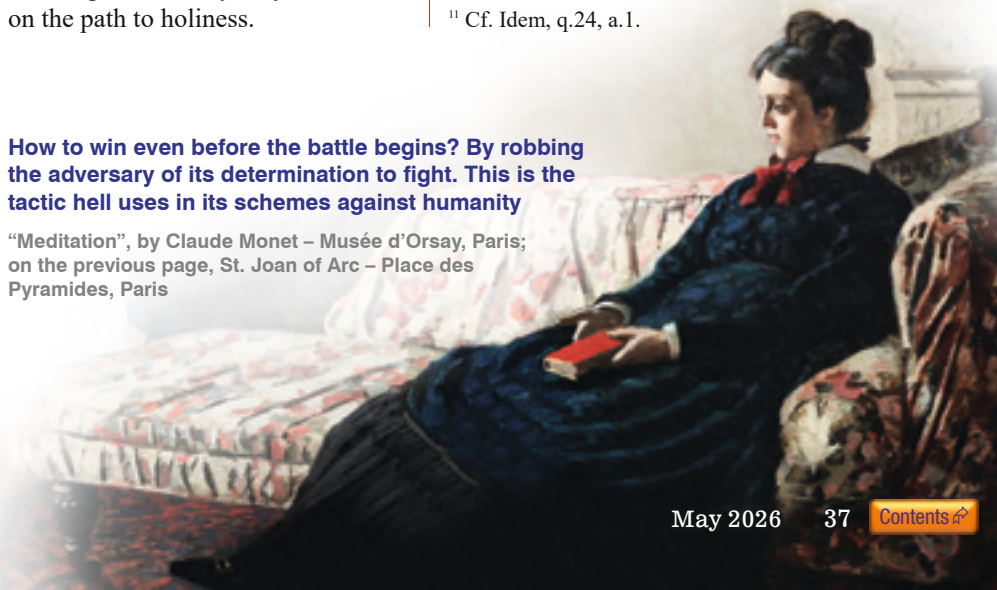
⁷ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Homily*. São Paulo, 11/1/2007.

⁸ MARQUES, Adilson et al. Religious-based Interventions for Depression: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Experimental Studies. In: *Journal of Affective Disorders*. Amsterdam. N.309 (July 2022), p.289.

⁹ PENNINX, Brenda et al. Understanding the Somatic Consequences of Depression: Biological Mechanisms and the Role of Depression Symptom Profile. In: *BMC Medicine*. London. Vol. XI. No.129 (May 2013), p.1.

¹⁰ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., I-II, q.37, a.4.

¹¹ Cf. Idem, q.24, a.1.



St. James the Less, Apostle and Bishop of Jerusalem

Mirror of Christ

A relative of the Saviour, he imitated Him in faithfulness and self-sacrifice, ultimately becoming a living image of the Divine Master.



Sr. Patricia Victoria Villegas ↗

Orphanhood is one of the most terrible sufferings a man can endure. Something similar to this excruciating hardship undoubtedly assailed the Apostles when Our Lord ascended to Heaven. He whom they considered their Master, Model, Father, Friend, and Redeemer had departed... A cloud had enveloped Him during the Ascension, and then it became clear to all that Jesus would forever be irreplaceable!

We can imagine the Apostles gathered with Our Lady on that first day when the universe seemed empty without the physical presence of the Saviour, an absence perhaps more terrible than that felt at the burial itself, for now, instead of a stone, eternity separated them from the Beloved.

It is likely that they wanted to remember the last moments with the Divine Master by celebrating a Holy Mass. The first after the Ascension! But who would preside over such a solemn act? Some opted for Peter, who held primacy among all; others for John, the Beloved Disciple, keeper of the secrets of the Heart of Jesus. The doubt vanished when, exchanging glances, they noticed James, called “the brother of the Lord, surnamed the Just,”¹ whose features were so similar

to those of the Master that it led Judas to give the infamous kiss to the Redeemer so that the soldiers would not confuse Him with this Apostle.

There was no doubt: he should celebrate the Holy Sacrifice, so that all might remember the face of the Saviour! What an honour and what glory for this Apostle to resemble his model, even physically!

First fruits for Our Lord Jesus Christ

Son of Cleophas Alphaeus and Mary – mentioned in the Gospels as Mary of Cleophas – St. James had family ties with Jesus: his mother was a first cousin of Our Lady. In the institution of the twelve, he is distinguished from St. James the Greater by the epithet “son of Alphaeus” (Mk 3:18).

Although the Apostle – according to the opinion of some historians – was at least ten years older than the Redeemer, it is believed, due to their close relationship, that they spent time together since childhood. Furthermore, it would be natural for James to follow with admiration the growth of Jesus in wisdom and grace (cf. Lk 2:40), which is why we find him at His side from the first announcements of the Good News.



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However, transcending the bonds of consanguinity, his vocation had a divinely mysterious origin, for, by heavenly inspiration his mother had offered him as a Nazarene before his birth, that is, consecrated to the Lord from his mother’s womb. James would be at the same time a cousin of the Incarnate Word and consecrated to Him from conception. And how much he knew he was freely loved by God, the Apostle would later make clear in his epistle: “Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. [...] Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures” (Jas 1:17-18).

The providential design that hovered over his family became evident throughout Jesus’ public life: his father was one of the disciples to whom the Divine Master appeared in Emmaus after the Resurrection; his mother, inseparable companion of the Blessed Virgin Mary and one of the Holy Women, stood at the foot of the Cross on Calvary; one of his brothers, Joseph, called “Justus,” was among the seventy-two disciples; another, Jude Thaddeus, was an Apostle like James; and a third, Simeon, became the second Bishop of Jerusalem...



However, James would have a primary role, some aspects of which we will consider.

Awaiting the glorious dawn of the Resurrection

Little is mentioned in the Gospels about the biography and deeds of this cousin of the Lord during the absorbing years with Him before the Passion. According to ancient Church traditions, James cherished such a particular affection for Jesus that his grief at His Death led him to promise to fast until the prophecy of the Resurrection was fulfilled. Thus, on Easter Sunday, Christ appeared to him even before communicating with the others.

Indeed, St. Jerome endorses a tradition according to which the Lord, after the opening of the stone of the tomb, came to meet him and, taking a loaf of bread in His glorious hands, blessed it, broke it, and presented it to James: “My brother eat your bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among those that sleep.”²

The familiarity shown in this apparition confirms our impression that they loved each other as brothers and also offers us a striking detail: despite the tragic moments of the Passion, St. James had revered the Master’s words and believed in them, for confidence in the Resurrection confirmed him in faith. Thus, he would later say: “Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him” (Jas 1:12). In the same vein, he would advise the faithful of the whole Church to have patience “until the coming of the Lord” (Jas 5:7), and to nurture an integral faith, for “he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that

[...] [he] will receive anything from the Lord.” (Jas 1:6-8).

To today’s relativistic standards, such words sound rather harsh, excessively “radical”... But James could be demanding of his listeners because his own conduct was irreproachable, a model of faithful fulfilment of the Lord’s words (cf. Jas 1:22), a man who always demonstrated his faith through works (cf. Jas 2:18), as the *leitmotif* of his entire life. This impeccable conduct had crowned him with the respect and esteem of his brothers in Christ, and even of the Jews, among whom he held considerable prestige.

The plume of the Apostle of the Gentiles describes a second visit by

the Divine Master to James in the days following the Resurrection. Writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul recounts that the Lord “appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles” (1 Cor 15:5-7).

By manifesting Himself in such a particular way to James, Our Lord wished to confirm him in his mission, giving him a prominent role among the faithful of the early Church, for which he should be, in some way, His very image.

The heir of Jerusalem

The Church of Jerusalem, first-born of the Churches of Asia and the whole world, was established by Jesus Christ who, shortly before the Ascension, entrusted it to St. James. This was a highly fraternal and symbolic gesture, for Our Lord bequeathed to Peter, Prince of the Apostles, the throne of the world, the City of Rome; but to James He left His own inheritance, the City of the Son of David.³

This privilege conferred upon him a certain preeminence in the Apostolic College; all respected his office and admired his virtue. The testimony left by St. Paul in mentioning the name of James first among those “reputed to be pillars” (Gal 2:9) of the Church shows how much his authority was considered from the earliest times, as a symbol of union and fidelity to the Saviour.

The canon of the New Testament preserved other allusions to this authority. We find, for example, in the last of the Catholic epistles: “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1). Similarly, the Acts of



Francisco Lecaros

The providential designs for this family became evident throughout Jesus’ public life, but James would have a particularly key role

“Family of Cleophas Alpheus, Mary, and their four children” - Fine Arts Museum of Ghent (Belgium); on the previous page, St. James the Less - Church of St. Dominic, Arezzo (Italy)



the Apostles recounts that, imprisoned by order of Herod, Peter was freed by an Angel and, before fleeing the city in search of safety, recommended that the faithful tell everything “to James and to the brethren” (Acts 12:17), thus indicating the deference he had toward the Bishop of Jerusalem.

Indeed, at the Council of Jerusalem, around the year 50 A.D., which addressed the controversies presented by Paul and Barnabas regarding the obstacles created in the evangelization of the Gentiles by certain Jewish customs, it was St. James who, listening to both of them, dictated the general rule that the Church would adopt henceforth: “Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God” (Acts 15:19).

An epistle-testament

The fame of St. James had spread to such a degree throughout the regions of Asia Minor that many Christians travelled to Jerusalem just to see him. St. Ignatius of Antioch, in a letter to the Apostle St. John, expresses his desire to meet the “venerable James, who is surnamed Just, whom they relate to be very like Christ Jesus in appearance, in life, and in method of conduct, as if he were a twin-brother.”⁴ The martyr of Antioch further adds that he had heard that whoever looked at James would find Jesus Himself and all the characteristics of His physiognomy.⁵

The grace of contemplating him was not granted to us, but we can glimpse the personality of this Apostle in the only epistle of his authorship that tradition has bequeathed to us. There we find a meditation and an application of the words of the Divine Master to the daily life of the

faithful in the early days, but which echoes to this day, with as much relevance as then.

In most of these early Christians who came from Judaism, there was a veiled dichotomy between what they believed and how they lived. For St. James, only integrity can meet the challenge of holiness: “let your yes be yes and your no be no” (Jas 5:12), he will say, following the example of Jesus. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind” (4:8)... Let us recall that hypocrisy had already claimed some victims in his community, such as Ananias and Sapphira (cf. Acts 5:1-11), so it was necessary to uproot it. To the upright, on the contrary, the Saint promises that even the devil “will flee” (4:7) from them.

His words reveal a person of principle, coherence, and sincerity: “Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin” (4:17), for “as the body apart from the spirit is dead,

so faith apart from works is dead” (2:26). And also “by his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom” (3:13). The Apostle pleads: “Do not speak evil against one another, brethren” (4:11), for “judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy” (2:13).

Thus, uniting radicality and gentleness, St. James does not abandon evangelical simplicity: “Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise” (5:13). And, like a good shepherd, he desires once again to gather the stray sheep of his flock: “whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (5:20).

The Epistle of St. James also contains, in detail, the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick: “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (5:14-15).

In short, his letter, full of fidelity and love for Jesus, can be considered his best testament, for St. James would be called upon to seal his words with the testimony of his own blood.

The holy end of a holy life

After the first persecution of Christians in Israel, which claimed the lives of Stephen and James the Greater, leading them to inaugurate the illustrious procession of martyrs, the faithful dispersed to the four corners of the earth. In Jerusalem, only three Apostles remained: Peter, James the Less, and John. Twenty



The fame of St. James had spread throughout Asia Minor and many Christians travelled to Jerusalem just to see him

St. James the Less cures the sick - Church of St. Dominic, Arezzo (Italy)

years of peace and expansion followed, a period that led Peter and John to leave to assume other episcopal sees of the nascent Church.

Around the year 60, another persecution broke out against the Church of Jerusalem. Paul, who was fortuitously visiting, was arrested and transferred to Rome, which ended up concentrating the hatred of the Sanhedrin against James, who remained at the head of the faithful of the Holy City.

The account of the historian Flavius Josephus⁶, an eyewitness to the events, reveal the details of the occurrence. He narrates that the high priest arrested James, taking advantage of the interval between the death of Governor Festus and the arrival of Albinus, appointed in his place, and brought him before the Sanhedrin, condemning him to stoning.

Hegesippus, a Jewish convert of those times, in transmitting the tradition that the first communities preserved of the martyrdom of their pastor, adds that the Sanhedrin forced the Apostle to climb to the pinnacle of the Temple and, while he was declaring the divinity of Jesus, they threw the Just One down from there.⁷ As he survived the fall, the Pharisees threw themselves upon him to stone him, and one of those present struck his head with a fuller's club, thus ending his life and his martyrdom.

The Christians reverently bore the Apostle's body to be buried near the Temple, and many Jews who disapproved of the act saw in this wicked murder one of the causes of the destruction of the Holy City, of that Jerusalem which had killed the Redeemer and the prophets, and which had once again become guilty of the blood of the innocent.⁸



Francisco Lecaros

The martyrdom so heroically faced sealed in James' soul the countenance of the suffering Christ, completing in him what he lacked to follow in the footsteps of the Lamb that was slain

Martyrdom of St. James the Less (edited) - Church of St. Dominic, Arezzo (Italy)

He completed in himself the countenance of Christ

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith” (Heb 13:7). This is the advice given in the Letter to the Hebrews, possibly referring to the martyrdom of James, “the Lord’s brother,” he who, by an exalted design, had displayed in his countenance, as in the purest mirror, the sacred face of the Saviour.

However, the greatness of this Apostle lies not only in his physical

resemblance to Jesus, but above all in having conformed his soul to that of Christ, assuming in himself the traits of the Master’s personality, with his virtues and sufferings. The martyrdom so heroically faced sealed in James’ soul the countenance of the suffering Christ, completing in him what he lacked to follow in the footsteps of the Lamb once slain.

St. James is, therefore, an example for our times: let us complete in our souls the image of Christ, like a shining mirror, by imitating with integrity Our Lord on the way of the cross! ✠

¹ Cf. ST. JEROME. *De viris illustribus*, c.II: PL 23, 639.

² Idem, 643.

³ Cf. MAISTRE, Étienne. *Histoires de Saint Philippe, Saint Barthélemy, Saint*

Matthieu, Saint Thomas et Saint Jacques-le-mineur. Paris: F. Wattelier, 1870, p.394.

⁴ ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH. *Epistola ad*

S. Ioannem Apostolum et Evangelistam: PG 5, 943-944.

⁵ Cf. Idem, 944.

⁶ Cf. FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS. *Antiquities of the Jews*. L.XX, c.9.

⁷ Cf. EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. *Historia ecclesiastica*. L.II, c.23: PG 20, 202.

⁸ Cf. ST. JEROME, op. cit., 642.



An Effective Aid in Difficulties Great and Small

We ask for everything from a mother: from help with resolving complex problems to aid in everyday setbacks. And the unfailing kindness with which she attends us inspires confidence.



✦ Elizabete Fátima Astorino

“Dona Lucilia!” is the first thought that, like a prayer, comes to the lips and hearts of many of her devotees in any difficulty. Some entrust small everyday matters to her maternal care, others seek solutions to great difficulties; and she attends to both, in a discreet way, respecting the times of grace proper to the spiritual life of each one.

Now, Dona Lucilia sometimes finds hearts somewhat hesitant towards her endeavours... This is not, however, an obstacle to her maternal care, which

lovingly overcomes the impediments of uncertainty.

Let us see how she confirmed the effectiveness of her action in the great and small cases that we narrate below.

In tribulation, the encounter with Dona Lucilia

Cássia Oliveira and her husband were going through a difficult ordeal: they had lost a baby about two months before the birth, and time was passing without them being consoled by the arrival of a new child. Furthermore, health complications made this possi-

bility even more remote, a situation that greatly saddened them.

One day, while visiting the city of Cotia, they came across the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima and decided to attend Holy Mass. At the end of the Liturgy, they approached to greet the celebrant, as is customary among the faithful. They took the opportunity to tell the Herald priest about their difficulties and ask for his blessing in the intention of being able to have a child.

The priest agreed, encouraging them in the hope of receiving the grace within a year... And before they could accuse him of being presumptuous, he explained that he would entrust the matter to Dona Lucilia, briefly describ-



Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, Cotia (Brazil)

The couple came upon the basilica of the Heralds in Cotia, and decided to tell the priest of their difficulties and ask him for a blessing

João Paulo Rodrigues

ing who she was and how she promptly answered requests made with faith. He recommended that they ask for her intercession and that, if their prayers were answered, they should return there to baptize their new child, as a token of gratitude.

The long-awaited birth

This is how Cássia recounts it: “The following month, in September, I discovered I was pregnant! My husband and I were overjoyed! I was certain I had received the grace and said, ‘We will have to fulfil this promise!’ The pregnancy was quite turbulent. I was hospitalized several times, feeling very insecure and afraid of losing the baby, but always trusting in God; and I also began to trust in the intercession of Dona Lucilia, always asking for her help.”

Her son, Gregório, was eventually born very healthy and, as promised, was baptized in the same church where his parents received the promise of Dona Lucilia’s help.

However, Cássia maintained a certain reserve regarding her intercessor, feeling reticent to trust her completely: “I confess that I was very grateful for the blessings; I fully believed that the priest had interceded, that he had been the channel of this grace, but I remained a little reluctant, for I thought: ‘Dona Lucilia hasn’t been canonized yet, so is she really a saint?’ I did not quite know what to think. Of course, I believe that people who lead exemplary lives and leave this legacy while still alive are in the glory of God; but even so, something was stopping me from writing my testimony.”

And so, Cássia allowed time to pass...

Another predicament, another prayer

Suddenly, a new need led her gaze back to Dona Lucilia.

Cássia is a teacher and, as at the beginning of every school year, there was a restructuring of schedules at the

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“Dona Lucilia, our mother, help me!” would have been her last words in this life, were it not for the immediate help of her protector.

Maria Fernanda after the accident, holding a photograph of Dona Lucilia; her car is pictured above

and speak of the two blessings I received in my life.”

By learning more about Dona Lucilia’s life and researching her on social media, Cássia became convinced that she would be heard. It only remained to be seen when and how this would happen.

The second intervention by Dona Lucilia

Perhaps to encourage Cássia’s faith, Providence wished to answer her gradually and demand persistence in prayer from her.

On the eve of the first day of classes, an unexpected and tragic death obliged the administration to change the schedules of several teachers, making it possible for Cássia to receive almost all the daytime hours she desired. She only had three evening classes left; therefore, she would only be away from her son for one night a week. Cássia, however, persisted in prayer, for she longed for the complete grace and was already certain that Dona Lucilia would obtain it from God.

And she continued waiting: “I never imagined how this could happen... Two days went by and the teacher who would

school where she works, which obliged her to accept some night classes. Seeing that this would greatly affect her routine as a mother and force her to spend a lot of time away from her son, she did not hesitate to ask Dona Lucilia for help. “Lord, I know there are so many problems worse than mine, so many sick people,” she thought, “but this is my reality today, this is the request I have to make: that I be dispensed from these evening classes and be able to teach during the day.”

With great confidence, Cássia prayed a novena to Dona Lucilia, gazing fervently at the same photograph she had received some time before, on her first visit to the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima. The narration continues: “I prayed: ‘Dona Lucilia, I ask for your intercession again. You are by God’s side, you already helped me the first time; so, I ask for your intercession.’ I also made a promise: if everything went well, if I didn’t have to give the night classes, I would send a report

be giving the other daytime classes, which were the ones I wanted, told me: ‘Cássia, I’m contacting you because I am leaving the daytime classes. I won’t be able to give these classes because I am working at another school. I wanted to know if you could switch with me: you give these classes during the day, and I’ll take the evening classes.’” It was the perfect solution for the case!

Cássia ends her account very grateful and convinced that she has a faithful intercessor, watching over her needs: “Now I have to fulfil my promise, believing that I have indeed received Dona Lucilia’s intercession once again, and it gives me great joy!”

A serious accident

For Maria Fernanda Aguiar, a resident of Maringá, the plea “Dona Lucilia, our mother, help me!” would have been her last words in this life, were it not for the immediate help that this kind lady granted her at the moment of a serious traffic accident that occurred on BR-376 highway.

Maria Fernanda works in the city of Marialva, a few kilometres from Maringá. One day, on her way home, she was driving in the slow lane of the highway when a semi-trailer truck, whose driver seemed to be in more of a hurry than she was, began to pass her.

During the manoeuvre, however, the truck collided with the left rear tire of Maria Fernanda’s vehicle, causing her to lose control: “My car spun, and was thrown in front of the truck – which continued advancing in the left lane – and it was pushed for several long seconds... Thinking that the car wasn’t going to stop, I literally screamed: ‘Dona Lucilia, our mother, help me!’”

“You are really protected!”

Analysing the episode later, Maria Fernanda confessed that her cry of



Oil painting based on one of the last photographs of Dona Lucilia, taken in 1968

It was a simple request, but in moments of anguish, little things take on great proportions, and Dona Lucilia, as a mother, understands this well

anguish was not aimed at preserving her life, as she immediately realized that the accident would be fatal. In that plea, she asked that Dona Lucilia be her advocate before the supreme tribunal of God, and she implored for the salvation of her soul.

Now, Dona Lucilia obtained from Providence that she be spared and that

her remaining in this life become a testament to supernatural power. No sooner had she called out the name of her heavenly intercessor than Maria Fernanda felt her vehicle – which until then had continued to be pushed at full speed by the truck – come to a stop, no one knows how, in the median of the highway, while the truck driver continued on his way without providing any kind of assistance.

As if to confirm the protection of Heaven, the wrecked car stopped between a sign and a pole, not colliding with either, which would have been fatal at the speed it was traveling. Furthermore, and even more remarkably, Maria Fernanda did not have a single scratch!

Some people rushed to the scene, thinking there was a casualty or at least a seriously injured person, and they could not hide their surprise when they saw her emerge from the vehicle safe and sound. Some even exclaimed: “Look, you are really protected... I thought you were going to die!”

Maria Fernanda lost her car, but what does a material loss mean compared to the precious gift of life?

Deeply grateful to her heavenly intercessor, she acknowledges that she owes much to Dona Lucilia for the constant help she receives from her in all circumstances of the day, in a life that has taken on a different value in her eyes after such a traumatic event.

Invisible to security guards...

To some, Dona Lucilia gives aid in extreme cases, like the one we just witnessed; others, she discreetly assists with everyday difficulties. This is attested to by Bernardete Monteiro from Portugal, who experienced her intervention in a common necessity.

Her account begins like this: “Last year, a very large canker sore appeared in my mother’s mouth. We had to go to

the doctor urgently because she was in a lot of pain and had difficulty eating.” As the problem could be worse than it appeared, the doctor on duty recommended some more thorough procedures and further testing.

“We went to the family doctor, who sent us to a hospital. There, in the emergency room, I could not accompany my mother; I would have to stay in a room for family members. So, I asked Dona Lucilia to help me get in with my mother, and that the security guards would not notice my presence and I could accompany her to the treatment room.” The request was simple, but in those moments of anxiety, the details take on great proportions; and a good mother, like Dona Lucilia, understands this well.

The difficulty began when one of the nurses warned Bernardete that she was not allowed to be in that area. She intensified her request to Dona Lucilia; and she was answered, because from then on no one bothered her anymore: “The truth is that I seemed like ‘the invisible woman’, because the security guards would pass by and notice other family members present, telling them that they needed to leave and wait outside, and they did not say anything to me; the nurse who attended to us certainly saw me, but she did not say anything to me either...”

Bernardete concludes: “I know that it was Dona Lucilia who helped and supported me that day. At the end of the appointment, we had the good news that it was a common canker sore, which only needed to be treated. It is a very simple testimony, but tells of a day of great suffering, in which I clearly felt the help of Dona Lucilia. And I promised to publish this benefit received through her intercession.”

A sweet and luminous smile

Adding to the number of her small and discreet interventions, we find Dona Lucilia resolving another domestic difficulty, but one that seemed insurmountable, in the city of Fortaleza.

Patrícia Paz, her husband, and their children were anxiously awaiting the visit of two brothers from the Heralds of the Gospel, who would bring the Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to their home. Everything was prepared, and the Heralds were already on their way when a problem that Patrícia recounts occurred:

“About thirty minutes before the scheduled time, ten o’clock in the morning, the power in our house simply went out. In our situation, it was a problem that would make the visit impossible, because the place where we live is very hot, and we would need the air conditioning or at least the fan working to be able to stay in the living room. And how would that be possible if we were in a blackout?”

To put an end to everyone’s already dwindling hope, her husband received a message on his phone from the electric company informing them that the power supply system would be under maintenance until three o’clock in the entire region... What a disappointment! What could they do? The solution was completely out of their hands. They both thought of cancelling the appointment, but the Heralds were already on their way... Patrícia then remembered Dona Lucilia:

“At that very moment, I asked for Dona Lucilia’s intercession, and the power came back on! Our Lady arrived soon after with our dear brothers. We prayed to her; we had some time for conviviality and took a photograph to record the moment. Soon after, the power went out

again. Dona Lucilia helped us to experience Heaven that day!”

Once again, living up to her name which evokes light, Dona Lucilia illuminated a difficult situation with her presence, also inviting us to entrust the problems of our lives, whether small or large, into her hands, confiding in her prompt and efficacious help. ✦

After asking for Dona Lucilia’s intercession, the electricity came back, and the family was able to receive the much-desired visit of Our Lady



Patrícia and her family, together with the two Heralds that visited their home

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United With the Redeemer in His Passion and Resurrection

As the apex of the Liturgical Year, the celebrations of the Easter Triduum are a source of countless graces for those who participate in them.

These pages illustrate some of the ceremonies held in churches and communities of the Heralds of the Gospel in several Brazilian states: at Our Lady of the Rosary Basilica in Caieiras (SP); at Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima Basilica in Cotia (SP); at the Parish of Jesus the Good Shepherd in Structural City (DF); as well as in other countries: at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sameiro in Braga, Portugal; at the Eucharistic Shrine of Maria Francisca de las Llagas in Cununyacu, Ecuador; at Our

Lady of Fatima Church in Tocancipá, and Our Lady of the Reconquest Oratory in El Retiro, Colombia; at the Mother of Good Counsel Church in Ypacaraí, Paraguay; at the church under construction in San Salvador, where the Celebration of the Lord's Passion was presided over by Bishop Luigi Roberto Cona, former Apostolic Nuncio to El Salvador, now appointed to Syria; and at the Heralds' house in Guatemala City. Also featured are the Stations of the Cross held at St. Agnes Chapel in Mairiporã (SP); as well as the Palm Sunday celebration at the Heralds' house in Fortaleza (CE), and at the Heralds' house in Maputo, Mozambique.



Mairiporã (SP)



Fortaleza (CE)



Mozambique



Paraguay



Cotia (SP)



Portugal



Caieiras (SP)



Guatemala



El Salvador

María José Feliz

Suzanne Adriano

Ivano Abubacar

Diego Brites

Sergio Caspeges

Nuno Moura

Stephen Nami

Roberto Salas

Sebastián Cadavid



Photos: Sérgio Céspedes



Cotia (SP)



Cotia (SP)



El Retiro (Colombia)

Josué Sánchez

Sérgio Céspedes



Cotia (SP)



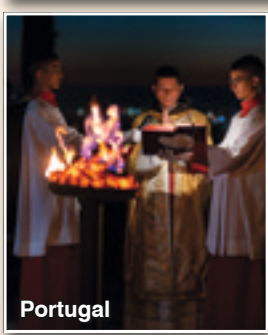
Ecuador



Paraguay

José Carlos Centurión

Nuno Moura



Portugal



Maria Fernanda Aguiar

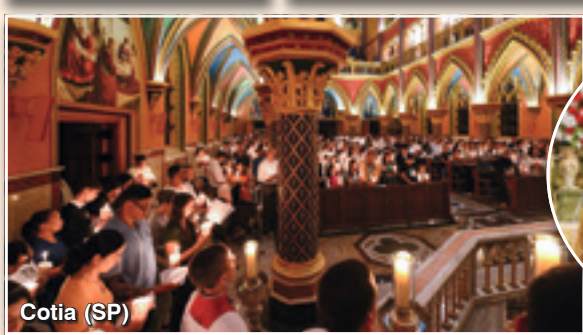
Maringá (PR)



Tocancipá (Colombia)

Jesse Arce

David Domingues



Cotia (SP)



Caieiras (SP)



Campo Grande (MS)

David Stüeppe

Diego Brites



Paraguay



Thalza Mendes

Structural City (DF)



El Retiro (Colombia)

Alejandro Restrepo



Photos: Weverton Cunha



Juiz de Fora (MG) – Affected by the recent floods in this Brazilian city, residents of the Vila Ideal neighbourhood received a comforting visit on March 2 of the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, during which food, mattresses, cleaning products and personal hygiene items were distributed.

Juan Diego Herrera



Ivo Criollo

Ecuador – In the city of Cuenca, the Pilgrim Image received a warm welcome from the pupils of the Ausubel Educational Institute (photo 1) and the catechism group from the Our Family School (photo 2). In Salinas, on March 10 military personnel from the Army Base for the 5th Artillery Regiment, Atahuapa, paid homage to her.

Photos: Laercio Peixoto



Fortaleza (CE) – On March 26, the City Council of Fortaleza, Brazil, paid tribute to the Heralds of the Gospel during a solemn session chaired by Councillor Jorge Pinheiro, who highlighted the organization's work in fostering Christian values within society and providing spiritual support to the community.



Slaves of Love to Jesus, through Mary

Between February and March, more groups of graduates from the course offered by the Reconquest Catholic Formation Platform made their solemn consecration as slaves of love to Jesus, through Mary, using the method of St. Louis de Montfort. Highlighted below are ceremonies held in the Brazilian cities of Goiânia and

Joinville (SC), Cotia and Caieiras (SP); as well as in the United States – presided over by Bishop Timothy Freyer, Auxiliary Bishop of Orange – in Xochimilco, Mexico – presided over by Bishop Juan María Huerta Muro, OFM, Diocesan Bishop – in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Paraguay and Argentina.



Caieiras (SP)

Stephen Nami



United States

Kim Newbery



Xochimilco (Mexico)

Romy Fischer



Colombia

David Bedoya



Mexico City

Romy Fischer



Paraguay

Stefano Pigliacelli



Cotia (SP)

Emerson Júnior



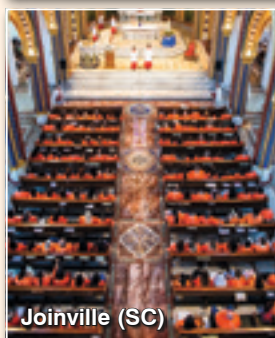
Dominican Republic

Juan Tomás Tavares



Ecuador

Ivo Cricollo



Joinville (SC)

João Paulo Rodrigues



Argentina

Alejandro Cosjanitini



Chile

Marcelo Zanetti



Goiânia (GO)

Henrique Souza

Reflection, Serenity and Judgement in the Art of Vermeer

There are works of art that impact us with their technical perfection, realism and vividness, inviting us to go further... As we enter an atmosphere of mystery, we gradually perceive its different “pieces”, in a composition that seems to want to impart a message.



✎ Santiago Rodríguez

What little is known about the life of one of the greatest masters of Baroque painting in the Netherlands, Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), seems to indicate that, despite being born into the predominantly Protestant culture of that region, he joined the Catholic Church, influenced by his wife and with the help of the Jesuits. Scholars argue that this would explain why his fifteen children received Catholic Baptism, as well as why he had an “imaginary orthodox” style, employed in works such as *The Allegory of Faith*.

An enigmatic artist – dedicated almost exclusively to genre painting¹ in the temporal sphere, with a costumbrista style – he managed to create a unique atmosphere in his works, with an air of religiosity that still intrigues laymen and experts alike.

We invite the reader to carefully analyse the painting presented here, known as *Vrouw met Weegschaal*, in the original Dutch, translated as *Woman Holding a Balance*, an unpretentious title that leaves the viewers free to draw their own conclusions.

In an exquisite demonstration that justifies Vermeer’s nickname of *Master*

of Light, we contemplate a strong yet subtle chiaroscuro, reminiscent of Caravaggio but without excessive theatricality. Giving space for light to diffuse through a golden veil, in an atmosphere of temporal serenity, the Dutch painter invites us to calmly delve into each aspect of the work. This undoubtedly contradicts a modern sensibility accustomed to the successive consumption of frivolous and superficial images, often designed to foment imbalanced and unreflective desires that exacerbate the passions.

The use of complementary colours – which contemporary marketing so often abuses to create a visual impact – is appreciated in this work in the various shades of deep blue, in perfect harmony with the complement of ochres and Neapolitan yellows, discreet and harmonious, forming a cohesive and temperate whole, simply admirable.

The work has been classified by many as belonging to the pictorial genre known as *vanitas*, a theme almost forgotten today, which invites reflection on the futility of temporal goods, based on the famous verse from Ecclesiastes: “*Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas – Vanity of vanities! All is vanity*” (1:2).

Transposing the principles of *vanitas*-type paintings – generally confined to the realm of *bodegones*, still life in English – to genre painting, the picture presents itself as an heir to earlier eras, in which the Last Things of man – death, judgement, hell and Paradise – were often depicted, bringing to light the immortality of the soul and its final destiny. It was not uncommon to find, in these cases, kings and bishops among the condemned, highlighting that, regardless of social status, no one escapes divine justice.

The figure of the young lady holding a balance is an allusion to judgement. On the table, objects of pecuniary value are observed: pearls, precious metals and coins. In front of her is a mirror, which could represent the banal invitation to vain self-contemplation.

It is noteworthy that, on the small plates of the weighing device – placed in dynamic asymmetry – nothing is visible, which could point to the search for spiritual goods. A theory confirmed by the pensive and serene expression on the face of this distinguished-looking “judge” whose slender, calm hands exude humility and integrity in their gesture. With her modesty of dress, she



“Woman holding a balance”, by Johannes Vermeer - National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

enjoys peace of mind, preferring eternal values to the temporal ones laid out on the table; inner self-knowledge to the delight in her ephemeral beauty reflected in the mirror.

In the background, hanging on the wall, is a painting of the Last Judgment, which reaffirms the artist’s intention to make the viewer understand that ordinary life is projected into eternity, and that we are weighed and measured in every act of our daily lives. Like this lady, we too are protagonists of a “masterpiece” called History, marked by the continual clash of good and evil,

armies whose contenders will end, before the Divine Judge, as victors on the right or as vanquished on the left.

In an almost mystical way, critics like John Michael Montias believe they even see in this woman – who seems about to give birth – an allegory of the Blessed Virgin Mary herself, who symbolically, in a media dimension, weighs souls to present them to God, gestating them in herself for salvation.

Whatever the interpretation, the fact remains that the careful contemplation of a work of art of this stature and depth introduces us to a meditative state,

compelling us to step back from the modern maelstrom that so often places greater value on the abstract and the chaotic, to the detriment of the allegorical and the luminous. By helping us to enter more deeply into the perspective that links the everyday with the eternal, the mundane with the religious, the painting offers us a thoughtful, serene and magnificent view of life. ✚

¹ Genre painting is a type of artwork that depicts everyday scenes, whether indoors or outdoors.

Unshakable Certainty of Victory

The prophet Isaiah is a fighter and, at the same time, he is a contemplative of the fight.

In this contemplation, he sees the enemies of God advancing on all sides and feels what Our Lord Jesus Christ was to declare:

“The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Mt 8:20).

And he thinks: *“Everyone has a point of favour; I have none. Everything is evil, pain, opposition. However, God is greater than all attacks.”* The certainty of divine victory remains present. He is on the verge of bursting into a denouncement but without self-pity. This is the worldview of the prophet Isaiah.

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

