



# HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

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*Priests Forever*



# His Love Is Faithful

St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: “Blessed dart, which carries with it into the heart, the God who cast it!” By this the saintly Father means that when God pierces a heart with an arrow of love – that is, with some special illumination by which He give it to know His goodness, the love He has for it, and the desire He has for that heart’s love – at that moment God Himself enters along with the arrow of love, for He, who is the archer, is Love itself: “For God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). And just as the arrow remains buried in the heart it has wounded, so also God continues ever united with the soul that He has wounded with His love.

Let us be persuaded, O human beings, that God alone really loves us. The love of relatives, of friends, and of all others who declare their love for us, except for those who love us purely for God’s sake, is but an interested love, directed towards some reason of self-love, for which they love us.

Yes, my God, I know well that You alone love me and desire my good, not for Your own gain, but solely on account of Your goodness, solely for the love which You bear for me; and I, ungrateful, have caused no one such displeasure, such sadness as I have caused You who have loved me so much. My Jesus, allow me to be ungrateful to You no longer. You have truly loved me, and I desire truly to love You for the remainder of my life. To You I say with St. Catherine of Genoa: “O my love, no more sins, no more sins”; You alone I will love, and no other.

ST, ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI.

De bem com Deus

[Means of Acquiring Divine Love].

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



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

*I am still informing myself on correct doctrine, so I would be very grateful if you could answer these questions:*

*David Cebrián Romero – Via e-mail*

*“Everything was created through and for Jesus Christ.” But, reading St. Anthony, I found the following phrase: “Everything that God does, He does for man, because He is good.” How do these statements harmonize? They seem contradictory.*

There is no contradiction between the quotation from Sacred Scripture and the statement of St. Anthony, since the texts are in different contexts.

When the Apostle affirms that everything was created through Christ and for Christ (cf. Col 1:16), he presents the Incarnate Word as the model of creation and its ultimate goal, the Father’s loving response to the glorification that the Son renders to Him: “the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand” (Jn 3:35). And since the Second Person of the Holy Trinity took on our flesh, humanity itself, as a whole, was elevated to another level. St. Anthony, for his part, seems to wish to highlight this same goodness

of God towards man, a goodness which led the psalmist to ask: “what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou dost care for him?” (Ps 8:4).

Indeed, the Creator entrusted the whole earth to man, giving him the mission of cultivating it (cf. Gn 1:28-30), in cooperation with Him. Through the mystery of Redemption, however, he was associated with the divine work in a marvellous way, as St. Paul declares: “in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the Church” (Col 1:24). Thus, the redeemed Christian is united by participation to the salvific mission of the Son of God.

*The Catechism of St. Pius X states: “To make the confession of venial sins more certain, it is prudent to confess, with true sorrow, also some more serious sin from past life, even if it has already been confessed at other times.” However, I read that Fr. Pio reprimanded his penitents when they did this.*

The pious advice of the *Catechism* is a pastoral suggestion, not applicable to all cases. The confessor can discern specific circumstances in which it is not appropriate to recall sins already absolved – such as, for example, when there is a certain neurosis of guilt or unbalanced scruple. Scruples, observed St. Ignatius of Loyola (cf. *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 348), can be useful for beginners, but they are certainly harmful to those advanced in the spiritual life.

On the other hand, there are certain cases in which it is worthwhile to reiterate previous Confessions for the greater humiliation of one’s own soul, to further purge the remnants of sin – *reliquiae peccati*, since certain inclinations gener-

ated by sin still remain in the soul, even after Confession – or in the case when one realizes that one has not confessed in an integral way; for example, hiding some aggravating circumstance.

Excessive scruples are not good, and it is against such that St. Pio of Pietrelcina warned; however, neither can one fall into unscrupulousness or laxity, which causes serious damage to the soul, and can lead to lukewarmness and even to final impenitence.

It is worth remembering that moral virtue lies between two extremes. For example, between gluttony and inappetence lies the balance of one who eats with temperance. ✠

## PRIESTS IN TIME AND IN ETERNITY

For centuries, the Levites sacrificed countless victims in the Temple. On the Altar of the Cross, however, the Redeemer united in Himself the Priest and the Victim in a single and eternal offering (cf. Heb 7:27). By promising His earthly presence until the consummation of time (cf. Mt 28:20), Christ perpetuated the Sacrifice of Calvary in the Eucharistic rite and extended His salvific action on earth through the ministerial priesthood.

Since the Old Covenant, priests remained in the presence of the Most High (cf. Dt 18:5); in the regime of grace, moreover, it is the Lord Himself who makes Himself present in them. As “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1), they are essentially mediators between the Trinity and mankind; They live on the threshold between time and eternity, between earth and Heaven.

Divine Wisdom did not entrust the priesthood to Angels, but to men like Jesus, the Incarnate Word. The priest was ordained *to be* Christ, *alter Christus*. Therefore, his sanctification is not an option, it is a duty.

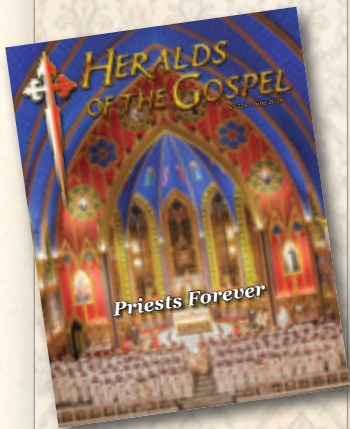
The primary temptation of the ordained minister consists in placing himself in the Lord’s place: “I am a god” (Ez 28:2). This is a Luciferian pride, a true sacrilege, which profanes the character of Christ imprinted on the soul. Thus, only holiness is compatible with this exalted vocation (cf. St. Pius X, *Hærent animo*, n. 8). Woe to him who corrupts it!

For St. Joseph Cafasso, the clergyman needs to be irreproachable (cf. 1 Tim 3:2): “To be an example is the same as being ecclesiastic, and whoever is not an example, it can be said that, in a certain way, he does not even continue as a priest” (*Instructions for Spiritual Exercises*, X). While common professions allow for a dissociation between office and conduct, the presbyteral ministry demands full identity between *being a priest* and *being an example* (cf. *ibid.*).

This does not imply the loss of the sacramental office through sin – character is indelible – but it shows that, especially for priests, “to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). Even their customs need to be *priestly*, beginning with the offering of their own “bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom 12:1). Far from the heresy of works and Pelagianism, their lives, rooted in prayer and sustained by grace, will expand the spiritual fatherhood of the Father in time, as a true *priest* – rightly referred to as a father.

In particular, in the Holy Mass, a living memorial of the Sacrifice of the Cross, the celebrant is configured with the Priest-Victim, as *alter Christus crucifixus* – another crucified Christ. Mystically, every priest is a stigmatist, and not only during the Eucharist. As the Redeemer, his life is total oblation: whether in silence, like of the lamp of the Blessed Sacrament that consumes itself in praise; or in preaching, radiating the Divine Word in the world as the *Christi* – “mouth of Christ” (St. Thomas Aquinas. *In Ioannem*, c.XII, lect.4, n.1633).

Upon crossing the threshold of eternity, the observant priest will hear: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master” (Mt 25:21). Fully united to the Trinity in Heaven, the blessed priest will continue to participate in the unending self-giving of Christ the Priest to the Father through the Holy Spirit, for the benefit of humanity. The priestly vocation, therefore, does not cease in this vale of tears: it reaches its apex in the definitive configuration with the High Priest in the Homeland, that is, in the “place of the Father” – and of the father – the priest. ✠



*Priestly ordination  
in the Basilica of  
Our Lady of the  
Rosary, Caieiras  
(Brazil), on  
12/4/2026*

Photo: Sergio Céspedes



# The Church's Greatest Treasure

The Church received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift – however precious – among so many others, but as the gift par excellence, for it is the gift of Himself, as well as the gift of His saving work.

## TASTING WOUNDED US AND TASTING HEALS US

Surpassing all fullness of generosity, exceeding all measure of love, [Jesus Christ] offered Himself as food. O singular and marvellous generosity, where the giver comes as a gift, and what is given is wholly identical to the giver!

He therefore gave Himself as food to us, so that man, who lay in ruins on account of death might, through this food, be raised up once again to life. Tasting wounded him and tasting healed him.

Behold how, from where the wound arose, the remedy came forth, and from where death entered, life came forth. Of the former tasting, indeed, it was said: “for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gn 2:17); of the latter, on the contrary, we read: “if any one eats of this Bread, he will live for ever” (Jn 6:51).

URBAN IV.  
*Transiturus de hoc mundo,*  
11/8/1264: DH 847

## A NEED SATISFIED BY THE EUCHARIST

When we partake of Jesus, the living and true Bread, we live for Him. By offering Himself completely, the crucified and risen Lord delivers Himself into our hands, and we realize that we were made to partake of God. Our hungry nature bears the mark of a need

that is satisfied by the grace of the Eucharist. As St. Augustine writes, Christ is truly “*panis qui reficit, et non deficit; panis qui sumi potest, consumi non potest*” (*Serm.* 130, 2): He is bread that restores and does not run short; bread that can be eaten but not exhausted. The Eucharist, in fact, is the true, real, and substantial presence of the Saviour, who transforms bread into Himself in order to transform us into Himself.

LEO XIV.  
*Homily,* 22/6/2025

## CHRIST PRESENT IN HIS OWN SUBSTANCE

This is the salvific memorial, in which we recall the blessed memory of our Redemption, in which we are drawn away from evil, strengthened in goodness and grow in virtue and grace, in which we truly progress through the bodily presence of the Saviour Himself.

Indeed, the other things of which we make remembrance, we embrace them with the spirit and with the mind, but we do not thereby obtain their real presence. Instead, in this sacramental commemoration of Christ, Jesus Christ is present with us, albeit in another form, but in His own substance.

URBAN IV.  
*Transiturus de hoc mundo,*  
11/8/1264: DH 846

## REAL PRESENCE PAR EXCELLENCE

This presence is called “real” not to exclude the idea that the others are “real” too, but rather to indicate presence par excellence, because it is substantial and through it Christ becomes present whole and entire, God and Man. And so it would be wrong for anyone to try to explain this manner of presence by dreaming up a so-called “pneumatic” nature of the glorious Body of Christ that would be present everywhere; or for anyone to limit it to symbolism, as if this most sacred Sacrament were to consist in nothing more than an efficacious sign.

ST. PAUL VI.  
*Mysterium fidei,* 3/9/1965

## THE GIFT PAR EXCELLENCE

The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift – however precious – among so many others, but as *the gift par excellence*, for it is the gift of Himself, of His person in His sacred humanity, as well as the gift of His saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past, since “all that Christ is – all that He did and suffered for all men – participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times.” (CCC 1085).

ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*Ecclesia de Eucharistia,* 17/4/2003

## A HIDDEN TREASURE

The Church possesses within itself a secret, a hidden treasure, a mystery, as if it were an inner heart. It possesses Jesus Christ Himself, its Founder, its Master and its Redeemer. [...] But where is He, if He cannot be seen? Herein lies the secret, herein lies the mystery: Christ's presence is true and real, yet sacramental; that is to say, it is hidden, yet at the same time identifiable. It is a presence clothed in special signs, which do not allow us to see His divine human form, but merely assure us that He, Jesus of the Gospel and now Jesus living in the glory of Heaven, is here, in the Eucharist.

ST. PAUL VI.  
*Homily, 28/5/1970*

## SACRAMENT THAT DOES NOT TOLERATE AMBIGUITY

The Eucharist is pre-eminently a *mysterium fidei*. Through the mystery of His complete hiddenness, Christ becomes a mystery of light, thanks to which believers are led into the depths of the divine life. [...]

It is important that no dimension of this Sacrament should be neglected. We are constantly tempted to reduce the Eucharist to our own dimensions, while in reality it is we who must open ourselves up to the dimensions of the mystery. "The Eucharist is too great a gift to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n.10).

ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*Mane nobiscum Domine, 7/10/2004*

## SIGN OF CONTRADICTION

Precisely because this is a mysterious reality that surpasses our understanding, we must not be surprised if today too many find it hard to accept



João Paulo Rodrigues

**"Trust in the words of my Son. If He was able to change water into wine, He can also turn bread and wine into His Body and Blood"**

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament - Lumen  
Prophetæ House, Franco da Rocha (Brazil)

the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It cannot be otherwise. This is how it has been since the day when, in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus openly declared that He had come to give us His flesh and His blood as food. This seemed "a hard saying" and many of His disciples withdrew when they heard it. Then, as now, the Eucharist remains a "sign of contradiction" and can only be so because a God who makes Himself flesh and sacrifices Himself for the life of the world throws human wisdom into crisis.

BENEDICT XVI.  
*Homily, 7/6/2007*

## DO WE HAVE THE SAME LOVE FOR HIM?

In this eager desire of Jesus we can recognize the desire of God Himself

– His expectant love for mankind, for His creation. A love which awaits the moment of union, a love which wants to draw mankind to itself [...] Jesus desires us, He awaits us. But what about ourselves? Do we really desire Him? Are we anxious to meet Him? Do we desire to encounter Him, to become one with Him, to receive the gifts He offers us in the Holy Eucharist?

BENEDICT XVI.  
*Homily, 21/4/2011*

## MARY, WOMAN OF THE EUCHARIST

If the Eucharist is a mystery of faith which so greatly transcends our understanding as to call for sheer abandonment to the word of God, then there can be no one like Mary to act as our support and guide in acquiring this disposition. [...] With the same maternal concern which She showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems

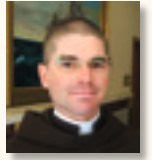
to say to us: "Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If He was able to change water into wine, He can also turn bread and wine into His Body and Blood" [...] As a result, there is a profound analogy between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the Angel, and the *Amen* which every believer says when receiving the Body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom She conceived "through the Holy Spirit" was "the Son of God". In continuity with the Virgin's faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in His full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.  
*Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 17/4/2003*



June 7 – The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

# Mary: The Way to the Eucharist



✠ Fr. Millon Barros, EP

*The Sacrament of the Altar could be called the “Sacrament of the Virgin,” for the Eucharist came to us through Mary, and through her we turn to the Eucharist*

**T**he Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ invites us to contemplate the excellence of divine wisdom: God, in the immensity of His love, makes Himself food to remain with us in the innermost depths of our being.

As Scholasticism teaches, every agent acts in proportion and likeness to its excellence. Now, how could the Saviour, in His infinite holiness, remain among men so sinful, ungrateful, and so often unfaithful?

Observing the world after the fall, the Most High sought what was most beautiful, pure, and immaculate. His predilection alighted upon His masterpiece, Mary; it was She who, through her fullness of grace, made humanity “worthy” to be visited by the Creator.

Eve, through disobedience, closed off access to the tree of life to her descendants (cf. Gn 3:22-24). The New Eve, the Blessed Virgin Mary, not only restored this right to us but gave us access to the very Author of Life. The blessed fruit of her womb became the Bread of Angels and food for those who live in this land of exile. Thus, St. Augustine clarifies: “He received His Flesh from the flesh of Mary. [...] He walked through this world in that same Flesh, and gave it to us as food for our salvation.”<sup>1</sup>

Pope John Paul II further expounds on this doctrine: “That divine Body and Blood, which after the Consecration are present on the altar, [...] retain their original matrix in Mary. [...] At the origin of the Eucharist, therefore, is the virginal and maternal life of Mary.”<sup>2</sup> In this sense, we can affirm that, in a certain way, the Eucharist is the “Sacrament

of the Virgin.” She did not take for herself, exclusively, the grace of carrying the Word in her womb, but obtained it for all, so that the promise might be fulfilled: “Whoever eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood remains in Me and I in him” (Jn 6:56).

After the hypostatic union, there is no union of men with Divinity more intimate than that provided by the Eucharist.<sup>3</sup> In the face of this great mystery, how should our interior comportment be?

The surest way to receive Communion worthily is not the fruit of mere human effort, but comes from imitating Mary. She is the “Woman of the Eucharist,”<sup>4</sup> the living tabernacle that the Father prepared for His Son.

As St. Louis Grignion de Montfort teaches,<sup>5</sup> it is necessary to prepare for Communion through Our Lady. We must implore her help, so that She may grant us the proper interior dispositions to receive Him whom She carried for nine months in her virginal womb.

Let us beseech Mary to obtain for us the gratitude that only She possesses for this invaluable gift. May She introduce us to the secret of the intimate bond between Mother and Son. And may we, on this Solemnity, finally, give to the Body and Blood of Christ the sweetest and most sublime glory: to adore Him through her from whose flesh the Saviour was formed. ✠

Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Outdoor statue in Quebec



Mediacrat (CC BY-SA 3.0)

François Boulay

<sup>1</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE. *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. In Psalmo 98, n.9.

<sup>2</sup> ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Angelus*, 5/6/1983.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ST. PETER JULIAN EYMARD. *Considerações espirituais: sacerdócio e vida cristã*. São Paulo: Cultor de Livros, 2020, p.346.

<sup>4</sup> ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n.53.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, n.266.

# A Priestly People



Fr. Alex de Brito, EP

**F**or a sovereign state to exist, it needs a people, a defined territory, an organized government, and laws that regulate the common good. However, a people can exist united by cultural or spiritual ties, even without their own territory, as is the case with Christians: “They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Liturgy of this Sunday, the Lord promises Moses that His people will be “a kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Ex 19:6). Now, this covenant also applies to us, reconciled by the unfathomable love of Christ, who “while we were still sinners [...] died for us” (Rom 5:8).

He attracted a numerous people (cf. Ps 99:3), as a Shepherd to his sheep (cf. Mt 9:36). And he wanted to multiply His ministers, for “the labourers are few” (Mt 9:37). Yes! Their number is small when compared to the size of the harvest; even smaller when holiness is considered...

Priests, and in particular *holy* priests, are the most especially called to work in the harvest, but the laity also participate in the priesthood of Christ, they are a priestly people. These are “in the front line of Church life; for them the Church is the animating principle of human society.”<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, by virtue of Baptism, “the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvellously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit maybe produced in them,” in every circumstance, provided it is “accomplished in the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> In this way, “what the soul is in the

body, Christians are in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the Virgin Mary never tired of, nor was She ever tiring to those whom She cared for as a Shepherdess. Upon learning that Elizabeth needed her, She hastened to the hill country to serve her (cf. Lk 1:39). She then went to Bethlehem, soon to give birth (cf. Lk 2:4-5). When the Child was born, She fled with Him to Egypt (cf. Mt 2:14), returned to Nazareth (cf. Mt 2:21), and later searched for Him in the Temple when She thought She had lost Him (cf. Lk 2:45-46).

When the wine ran out, She interceded in favour of the bridegroom and, knowing that the hour had not yet come, commanded everyone to obey Jesus (cf. Jn 2:1-11). When the shepherds of her Divine Son abandoned Him, She remained standing by the Cross (cf. Jn 19:25-27) and forgave them as a Mother. Finally, She joined them in the Upper Room, teaching them to pray, awaiting the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14).

The sheep grieve the lack of good shepherds, models of the priesthood, in which they themselves participate. Mary was a sublime example of following Christ and a model of virtue for all the priestly people. Whoever imitates her generosity will never stray from the Lord’s flock! ✠



The Good Shepherd - Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin

*If the sheep lose heart, Our Lord does not fail to favour them, above all, by sending good shepherds; it is up to them to participate in the priesthood of Christ by their generosity in following Him*

<sup>1</sup> LETTER TO DIOGNETUS, c.V, n.5.

<sup>2</sup> CCC 899.

<sup>3</sup> CCC 901.

<sup>4</sup> LETTER TO DIOGNETUS, c.VI, n.1-3.

# Deliver Me, Lord, From My “Friends”



✠ Fr. Felipe Paschoal, EP

*The relationships we call “friendship” are established almost naturally, and we cannot live without them. However... are they all sincere?*

**F**riend: what a hackneyed word! We use it to label relatives or neighbours, work colleagues, study partners, or mere acquaintances... On social media, “friends” multiply, sometimes reaching the thousands. However, as the saying goes: “a friend to all is a friend to none”...

It is a fact that friendships are established naturally and it is impossible to live without them: they are for each person like “half of my soul.”<sup>1</sup> Among earthly goods, there is nothing that surpasses them.<sup>2</sup> But... are they all sincere? Today’s Liturgy offers some elements to answer this question.

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah declares that he finds himself in the midst of a fierce persecution: “I hear the whisperings of many: ‘Terror on every side! Denounce! Let us denounce him!’” The continuation of the verse reveals, with terrible simplicity, the identity of these persecutors: “All those who

were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine” (Jer 20:10). Yes, friends... and all of them!

Now, St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>3</sup> explains that true friendship requires selfless benevolence, by which we desire good *for the other*, and not a good that exists *in the other* – which characterizes concupiscent love.

Thus, false friends seek to take advantage of us. They are “self-interested,” wanting to benefit from our possessions, goodwill, energy, connections... In short, they are enemies in disguise.

However, worse and more insidious are those who, as in Jeremiah’s time, covet our most precious treasure: our life (cf. Jer 20:13), not only that of our body, but also that of our soul. “Be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna” (Mt 10:28), warns the Saviour.

False friends present themselves with the mask of kindness; in reality, however, they aim to dissuade the righteous from their holy convictions. When they fail to achieve this goal, they begin to persecute them. It pains us to admit, but this fury can occur even among family members as well as among brothers and sisters in the same Faith, that is, “my mother’s children,” children of the Holy Church, as the Psalm laments (cf. Ps 68:9).

A true friend, on the other hand, stands by our side, as Jeremiah declared (cf. Jer 20:11), not only in good times, but at *all times*. We can always count on him. In fact, if a friendship ends one day, it is because it never even began. In this sense, we must trust in the friendship of God, who never abandons us and whose salvation is our “constant help” (Ps 69:13).

Friendship further implies reciprocity. However, in the relationship between men and God, there is an infinite disparity: “Everyone who acknowledges Me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father” (Mt 10:32). Therefore, friendship with the Lord can only be established by His own gift, grace.

Having loved us to the point of dying for us, the Redeemer is our friend *par excellence*: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13). Let us follow His example. Where there is no true sacrifice, there is no true friendship. ✠



Job and his “friends” - Ala Ponzone Museum, Cremona (Italy)

<sup>1</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE. *Confessions*. L.IV, c.6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *On Kingship*. L.I, c.11.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Idem. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.23, a.1.

# If We Have Died with Christ, We Shall Also Live with Him



✠ Fr. Francisco Javier de Oyarzábal, EP

**I**mmortality: this is the dream of all mankind since the original fall... In fact, “sin came into the world through one man and death through sin” (Rom 5:12). But how to restore life? Paradoxically, with death, as Our Lord warns in this Sunday’s Gospel: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10:39). St. Paul is equally emphatic: “If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom 6:8). Here is the divine mystery: life is only gained when it is lost.

St. Thomas Aquinas, following Tradition, comments that such death consists in participation in the Death of Christ through Baptism.<sup>1</sup> When this Sacrament is performed by immersion, the catechumen is submerged three times, to represent the triduum of the Redeemer’s death. For this reason, the Catholic Church usually baptizes catechumens during the Easter Vigil, at the end of the days of Jesus’ burial. The baptized person “dies” to live. As the Sacraments of the New Law accomplish what they signify, Baptism truly produces death to sin.

But death to sin also means new life in Christ through charity. Through grace, there is a restoration of Paradise, for the righteous are truly a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). When we love, then we truly live, for the life of our soul is love.<sup>2</sup>

In the Gospel, Our Lord warns: “Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Mt 10:37). And He immediately adds: “whoever does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (Mt 10:38). With these words, He makes it clear that, under the regime of grace, it is necessary to fulfil the First

Commandment in an even more perfect way; it is about an unconditional love for God above all, even over our own lives and over those who live in our home.

Thus, Aquinas explains that our love for God also implies an implacable hatred of sin, because it is opposed to Him. For this reason, “we ought to love sinners, out of charity, in respect of their nature. On the other hand, their guilt is opposed to God, and is an obstacle to happiness. Wherefore, in respect of their guilt whereby they are opposed to God, all sinners are to be hated, even one’s father or mother or kindred, according to Luke 12:26. For it is our duty to hate, in the sinner, his being a sinner, and to love in him, his being a man capable of bliss; and this is to love him truly, out of charity, for God’s sake.”<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, when our love is purified from sin, leading us to hate evil without reserve, our soul opens itself to true love which, guided by the Holy Spirit, allows us to love our neighbour as ourselves, thus causing the old man to die and the new man to be born (cf. Rom 6:6).

This love knows no death: it prevails until blessedness in heavenly Paradise. Through it we restore our

immortality because, as the Apostle writes, “Love never ends” (1 Cor 13:8). ✠



Allegory of charity, by Giotto di Bondone - Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padua (Italy)

*Death to sin means new life in Christ through charity. When we love, then we live*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Super Epistolam ad Romanos*, c.VI, lect.1, n.474.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ST. FRANCIS DE SALES. *Treatise on the Love of God*. L.VII, c.7.

<sup>3</sup> ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.25, a.6.



# A Sign of Unsurpassed Love

The Eucharist is above all a demonstration of God’s love for us. He wanted to give Himself to us fully, so that we might obtain more than our parents possessed in Paradise, with a view to eternal blessedness.

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

**A**ngelic nature, the work of God’s hand, is characterized by being purely spiritual, endowed with intelligence and will. When, through intellection, the Angels understand one same principle and love this ideal, they are united with one another.

Ideas are also a factor in uniting men, but, already in the Earthly Paradise, God wanted to place in the human creature the instinct for food, in order to promote unity around the table. If, as Scripture says, He made “wine to gladden the heart of man” (Ps 104:15), a good meal gladdens the whole human being. Food is indispensable for health;

however, the bodily benefit is not, as materialists think, its main purpose, but rather social interaction. Partaking in the same meal favours conversation and mutual understanding, and is also an excellent instrument for diplomacy.

Talleyrand, the great French diplomat, knew this rule: when he had to defend France’s interests before Germany or Austria, he would ask the king to send him a large quantity of wines, champagnes, and cheeses – especially the famous *Brie* and *Camembert* – because, he said, during a reception and conversation, cases were resolved more easily and always successfully.

To celebrate major events, such as important anniversaries, university graduations, or the inauguration of new buildings, festivities are usually organized, interspersed with theatrical performances, musical presentations, and fireworks displays. Such events create an atmosphere of joy, but this joy takes on more substance at the table, because eating together holds an imponderable element of *participation*.

Therefore, when like-minded people sit down to dine together, the union of ideals is complete, and all the partakers are strengthened by the bonds forged with one another.

## *Food of true Wisdom, a sign of unsurpassed love*

In fact, food was created by God to serve man as a means to know and love his Creator.

Why, then, did He place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the centre of the Earthly Paradise, whose fruit Adam and Eve could not taste? Because He wanted to give them the possibility of an even greater order by abstaining from something through the effort of obedience and submission.

However, there is still a fundamental point that leads us to better understand why God subjected human nature to the need to eat every day in order to subsist.

Adam must have longed for the knowledge of good and evil, trusting that the Creator would offer it to him in



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**The bodily benefit of eating is not its main purpose, but rather social interaction, for dining together has an imponderable element of participation**

“Philip II of Spain in a banquet with family members and courtiers”,  
by Alonso Sánchez Coello - National Museum of Warsaw

a special meal. God always acts in this way: He demands a small renunciation, to later grant an infinitely greater reward. At a certain point, He would incarnate Himself and leave Himself as a food of true Wisdom. Indeed, even if man had not sinned, the Eucharist would have been instituted, for this was the divine plan from all eternity.

Now, original sin consisted of a misuse of the appetite; and decadent man, in his folly, made food into a delight for himself, refining it in the desire to enjoy it with an entirely selfish pleasure.

In Paradise, God had commanded: “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gn 2:17).

But, once sin was committed, Our Lord comes to earth and says to us, who were born with original sin, a creative and divine word: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life” (Jn 6:53-54).

From a symbolic standpoint, the Eucharist is a reparation for original sin, but above all it is a sign of God’s unsurpassed love for mankind. He wanted to give Himself to us fully, so that we might obtain more than our parents possessed in Paradise, with a view to eternal happiness.

The word for banquet in Latin is *convivium*, and it is in the Eucharist that we find the pinnacle of communion with God. The benefits of this Sacrament will never be fully comprehended, classified, and explained on this earth, because they are indescribable and inscrutable even to the imagination of the most perfect of Angels. And it is precisely to this grand banquet that we are invited.

### ***A dogma of Faith proven by miracles***

The Real Presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine is a dogma of Faith revealed by Our Lord, who gave us His word in the Gospel: “For

my Flesh is food indeed, and my Blood is drink indeed” (Jn 6:55).

Later, when challenged by Protestants in the 16th century, the Church clearly defined that the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ are present in the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, throughout history, numerous miracles have occurred that prove the grandeur of this extraordinary Sacrament. Among them, the miracle of Bolsena stands out, which led Pope Urban IV to institute the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. Prior to this, the revelations of St. Juliana of Mont-Cornillon had already initiated discussions in this regard, and theologians were debating whether or not this feast should be established.

The Pope was in Orvieto when news reached him of a miracle that had occurred in a nearby city: a certain priest, tormented by temptations against faith concerning the Eucharist, was celebrating Mass when the host transformed into a piece of Flesh in his hands and began to bleed, soaking several corporals.

Another episode occurred with St. Louis IX, King of France. He was sitting at a table, writing, when a page approached breathlessly:

“Your Majesty! Your Majesty! Come quickly, there is still time!...”

“What happened?” he asked.

“Right now, during Mass, at the moment when the priest elevated the host, the Child Jesus appeared in his hands, and He is there!...”

St. Louis put his pen aside, stood up, and genuflected with profound recollection. Then he sat down again and said:

“God works this miracle not for believers, but for those who doubt. My faith does not require that I see, and I do not want to lose my merit; I believe fully and firmly, and I have already adored Him from here!”<sup>2</sup>

Other miraculous events that occurred with the saints also confirm the



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**Adam must have longed for the knowledge of good and evil, trusting that the Creator would offer it to him in a special meal**

Detail of “Original sin”, by Michiel Coxie - Art History Museum, Vienna

veracity of the Redeemer’s presence under the Eucharistic veils.

St. Catherine of Siena, for example, spent days being nourished solely with the Eucharist, and on many occasions, once she had ingested the Sacred Host, her body remained suspended in the air.<sup>3</sup>

It is said that St. Pius X sometimes took hours to celebrate Mass because, as soon as he pronounced the words “This is my Body which will be given up for you,” he would enter into ecstasy and levitate with the host aloft, to the astonishment of the congregation.

### ***How Christ is in the Eucharist?***

Let us now see in what manner Our Lord Jesus Christ is in the Eucharist. According to St. Thomas Aquinas,<sup>4</sup> He is there with His *glorious* Body as He is now in Heaven, in His *natural dimensions, whole in every particle and hidden beneath the accidents*.

When we look at that small host, our minds are unable to comprehend how He is present there in natural size. However, there is an image that brings us closer to reality, without, however, penetrating it entirely: when we talk to a person, or have a landscape before



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**Much more than a memorial, the Mass is the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary, instituted by Our Lord during the Last Supper, when He said: “This is my Body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”**

The Last Supper, by Fra Angelico - San Marco Museum, Florence (Italy)

our eyes, it is not necessary for our interlocutor to try to diminish his stature, or for the panorama to be reduced to enter our retina. Everything fits in real size in human vision. So too is Our Lord Jesus Christ in the host.

And, if the host is broken, He still remains whole in each of the parts, similar to what happens with a mirror: when it breaks, the image is reflected completely in all the fragments.

To understand that He is hidden beneath the accidents, let us imagine a well-closed reliquary case. When we look at it, we see a mere reliquary; but if we open it, we will find its precious contents. Similarly, the Eucharistic Species are like a case, inside which Our Lord Jesus Christ is hidden.

It is because of His infinite goodness towards us, and to make it easier for us to receive Him, that He covers Himself under the appearances of bread; if He were to appear in His full form, our first reaction would be one of amazement – which would cause us to lose the merits of believing without seeing – and the second of reverential fear, so that we would experience great apprehension about receiving Communion.

### ***The Eucharist is a true sacrifice***

Luther and the Protestants claimed that the Eucharist was a mere remem-

brance, and they spread this erroneous doctrine. For this reason, they were condemned by the Church, which declared that, much more than a memorial, the Mass is the renewal of the sacrifice of Calvary.<sup>5</sup>

It was Our Lord who instituted this ceremony on Holy Thursday, during the Last Supper, when He said: “This is my Body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me” (Lk 22:19).

Therefore, the specific sacrifice that He suffered being scourged, crowned with thorns, and giving His life on the Cross is repeated on the altar. The essence is exactly the same, with one sole Victim.

The accidental circumstances are different, for on the Cross the sacrifice was bloody; while in the Eucharist it occurs without bloodshed. On the Cross, the Body of Jesus was mortal; in the Eucharist, Christ no longer dies. On the Cross, He suffered only once; in the Eucharist, He offers Himself countless times. On the Cross, the price of His Blood brought about Redemption; in the Eucharist, the application of this price He won on the Cross is obtained.

However, the infinite value of the sacrifice of Calvary is identical to that of the sacrifice offered on the altar.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Union of the soul with God***

Now, once we receive Him, how is He united with us?

There is, among men, a spiritual union, which is based on a bond of love, by which, despite great distance, those who love each other maintain an interconnection. There is also an external union, which is established by physical contact, but this is very superficial, since two people can be side by side, and even jostling one another, without, however, even knowing each other.

And yet neither of these is the union we have with Our Lord at the time of Communion, for this union does not signify being together, nor even being joined fast, but it is a union so strong that we can call it “mutual interpenetration,” as He said in the Gospel: “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me will live because of Me” (Jn 6:57).

As long as the species remain uncorrupted within us, sanctifying grace not only increases, but the soul is filled with grace, and union with God intensifies, for He penetrates us in the manner of water soaking a dry sponge.

When we eat food, our body digests and avails itself of what is useful for health and physical development. Therefore, we transform that food into energy for our body. But, according to

several saints and doctors, in the Eucharist an opposite phenomenon occurs: given that the substance is infinitely superior to us – for it is Jesus Himself, true God and true Man – instead of transmuting Himself into us, it is He who assumes us and sanctifies us.

Who would not want to have all the gold in the world concentrated into their hands? But in this case, it is not about becoming rich, because earthly riches are nothing compared to the supreme value of this Sacrament. Rather, the essence here is drawing closer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Author and inexhaustible source of all grace, so that we may be millionaires in eternity!

### *Pledge of future life*

If we carefully keep a cherry seed, it can be preserved for years and, once sown in the ground, it will germinate and grow into a leafy tree. But if we take the same pit and chop it into slivers, even if after twenty-four hours we gather all the fragments and plant them, a cherry tree can no longer grow from them.

Those who strive to be faithful to God's Law, within the practice of piety, seeking to avoid occasions of sin and saying "no!" to temptations; these maintain grace in their soul like a seed. Those, on the contrary, who yield to envy, comparison, vanity, falsehood, and... finally end up falling into some mortal sin, are like those who cut up the cherry pit: they no longer have within themselves the germ of eternal glory!

The world of today places tremendous value on health and concern for

well-being. However, even if a person reaches eighty or ninety years of age, death is a prospect from which no one escapes. One day we will all die and our flesh will be consumed by worms, leaving behind only a skeleton and a fearsome skull!

to remain buried for all eternity in the depths of the earth.

What is our homeland? We were born to go to Heaven, and that is precisely our longing! But it is necessary to go through a period of trial during which we feel our contingency and the experience of our misery, and how without God we are worth nothing, we have nothing, and we are nothing.

Now, in order to maintain virtue and be resurrected in the future life, we need to nourish ourselves with the Eucharist, according to the promise of Our Lord: "he who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:54). The Eucharist wins for us our resurrection and is a pledge by which God assures us of Heaven.

Thus it will happen on the last day: Our Lord will come and, at the sound of the trumpet, all the dead will rise. Those who rejected Communion will recover their bodies in a suffering state, so as to burn in the torments of hell without being consumed; those who received the Body and Blood of Christ will rise with their bodies in a state of glory.

This is the joy we will have when we leave the darkness of this world and, emerging into the light of eternity, find the wonders of Heaven, in the contemplation of God face to face, worshiping Him as He sees Himself, singing His glories and enjoying His happiness! ✠

Excerpts from oral expositions given between 2000 and 2009



### **The Eucharist is the apex of communion with God, and a pledge by which He assures us of Heaven**

Msgr. João during a Eucharistic Celebration in August of 2009, in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)

Deep in our souls, however, there is something that yearns for resurrection. When we pray the *Salve Regina*, we recognize ourselves as "poor banished children of Eve," and indeed, we are those who left their homeland and came to this "valley of tears," but we also know that our present existence is not true life, and that our destiny is not

<sup>1</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT. *Decreto sobre o Sacramento da Eucaristia*, c.III: DH 1640.

*catéchisme populaire*. Cadillac: Saint-Remi, 2018, p.28.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. UNDSSET, Sigrid. *Catarina de Siena*. Rio de Janeiro: Agir, 1956, p.89.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. III, q.75, a.4; q.76, a.1-4; q.77, a.1.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT. *Doutrina e cânones sobre o*

*Sacrificio da Missa*, cân.3: DH 1753.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. CCC 1367.

The Holy Eucharist



**“We, though many,  
are one body”**

Just as the Father and the Son are one through the Holy Spirit, Our Lord also leads us to unity through the bond of charity and through the most sublime of all Sacraments.



✦ **Lavinia Colombo**

**T**he Sacrament of the Altar has always been the central object of adoration, honour, and doctrinal explanation of the Holy Church. And it could not be otherwise, for she “draws her life from the Eucharist,”<sup>1</sup> in whose species of bread and wine is contained the Real Presence of Christ,<sup>2</sup> enlivened by the Holy Spirit. This august gift encompasses all the spiritual good of the Church, as the Magisterium teaches, and the other six Sacraments, as well as all ecclesial ministries and works of apostolate, are ordered to it and carried out by reason of it.<sup>3</sup>

Now, more than that, “the Eucharist makes the Church”:<sup>4</sup> it is the condition of her existence and the element that makes her *Catholic*, that is, universally one, because it unites all the baptized *in one Body*. This is a sublime and profound truth, but one that we rarely con-

sider! Early Christian times were very aware of it and, therefore, “used the same words, *Corpus Christi*, to designate Christ’s Body born of the Virgin Mary, His Eucharistic Body and His Ecclesial Body.”<sup>5</sup>

What, then, is the relationship between these three realities? What are

the roots of this most beautiful mystery of our Faith? To duly meditate on this subject, let us go back to the very institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper.

***The intimate desire of the Sacred Heart of Jesus***

The Gospel of St. John, in one of its most beautiful, moving, and magnificent passages, records the prayer made by Our Lord Jesus Christ moments before going to the Garden of Olives to suffer the Passion. The Saviour had just entrusted to the Apostles, newly received into the priesthood, the most invaluable legacy: His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity under the species of bread and wine. Knowing, then, “that His hour had come” (Jn 13:1), in a mixture of sorrow and tenderness, He prayed to the Father

*The gift of the Eucharist is the condition for the Church’s existence and the element that makes her universally one*

in these words, which we briefly recall here:

“Father, glorify Thou Me in Thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made. I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; [...] I am not praying for the world but for those whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine; [...] I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me; [...] But now I am coming to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. [...]

“I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me. The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and Thou in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me and hast loved them even as Thou hast loved Me” (Jn 17:5-23).

This fervent supplication characterized for all eternity what the Church, about to be born from the open side of the Crucified, would become. Indeed, Our Lord insists four times, with different nuances, on this same request: “Father, that they may be one even as We are one.”

St. Thomas Aquinas explains<sup>6</sup> that this desire of the Saviour consists in the unity of the Holy Church being the most perfect possible reflection of His union with the Father. Just as Both are one God through the Love proceeding from Them, which is the Holy Spirit, Our Lord asks that we also be one

through participation in the indestructible bond of charity.

Inspired by the Paraclete, St. Paul expressed this desire of the God-Man in doctrine, especially in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. [...] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1Cor 12:12- 13, 27).

Now, this unity becomes effective in the Church through a Sacrament: the Holy Eucharist, the spiritual banquet of the baptized. It is through the Bread of concord, explains St. Augustine,<sup>7</sup> that God makes those who have the same way of life dwell in the same house, for it *signifies* and *accomplishes* the communion of life with God and the unity of the faithful by which the Church is itself.

It *signifies* because it is truly the Body of Christ under the species of bread, made from the union of countless grains, and wine, made from the juice of many grapes, which symbolizes the innumerable baptized united to the Redeemer and to one another in charity, to form the one Church, the Mystical Body of Christ;<sup>8</sup> and it *accomplishes* this in the sense that it is the indispensable cause and condition of the union of the faithful,

*By Baptism we are members of Christ's Body, and this unity becomes effective through the Eucharist, the spiritual banquet of the baptized*

which makes us “one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

### *The Christian is another Christ*

For the unity of the Mystical Body, our bond with its divine Head is the first and most important factor.

In receiving Communion, we receive as our principal fruit inti-



Jesus with the Eucharist - Church of St. Charles Borromeo, Liverpool (England); on the previous page, detail of “Exaltation of the Eucharist” - Pedro de Osma Museum, Lima (Peru)

RochHullandemu (CC-by-sa 4.0)



mate union with the Saviour,<sup>9</sup> as He Himself revealed to His disciples in Capernaum: “I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven [...]. He who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me will live because of Me” (Jn 6:51, 56-57). This is the most perfect union possible with Christ on this earth!<sup>10</sup> Moreover, comments St. Augustine,<sup>11</sup> united to the Divine Body, we become what we receive; that is, we not only become Christians, but *Christ Himself*.

Great mystery, ineffable union, honour above all merit, that man and Christ should be one! It is such a great honour for us – affirms St. John of Avila –<sup>12</sup> that our tongue and reason are silenced! St. Peter Julian Eymard, a preeminent adorer of the Blessed Sacrament, also exclaims: “Communion! How significant is this single term! [...] The Body of Jesus Christ is united with our body and His Soul with our soul, His divinity resting upon both. Our body is, so to speak, inserted into that of Jesus Christ, which, as it gains in dignity and nobility, envelops and dominates us, and we are fused into Him in an ineffable union. What a magnificent thing this union of a glorious and resurrected Body with our wretched nature is! [...] It is a celestial spectacle.”<sup>13</sup>

By virtue of this precious gift, the Redeemer prolongs His presence and work in the world, because He always participates in our struggles and sufferings, since He is persecuted in us, His members (cf. Acts 9:4).

In the same way, He multiplies His preaching, His miracles, His mercy, and His patience in labours throughout the world. Our glorious Head truly

lives until the end of the world in His Mystical Body, pilgrim and militant on this earth. And, for this very reason, all the good works of the righteous, as living members of the Church, even if they seem simple or commonplace, are most precious and worthy of eternal life.<sup>14</sup>

*United to Christ,  
the Head, we must  
also contribute to the  
Unity of the Mystical  
Body through charity,  
rejecting all that  
causes discord*

***Let us not flee from union  
with other members***

Considering such a profound union with the incarnate Word, it becomes easy to understand how we, Catholics, are bound to one another and what this bond implies.

The Apostle, once again, is extremely eloquent in addressing this subject (cf. Eph 4:3-16). He exhorts us, first of all, to always preserve the unity of the Spirit, expressed in one faith, one hope, one Baptism. In fact, as St. Irenaeus explains, “our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion”;<sup>15</sup> thus, by frequently, lawfully, and fruitfully nourishing ourselves on the Sacred Banquet, we maintain our full agreement with Catholic doctrine and live the faith in its integrity, further consolidating ourselves in unity.

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Jesus and the Eucharist - Santa Monica Museum of Sacred Art, Puebla de Zaragoza (Mexico)



into every kind of good disposition toward one another, for a divided body cannot survive, nor can an organism be constituted of self-sufficient members, linked by themselves to the head and – supreme aberration! – disjointed from one another...

In this sense, special rejection is due to everything that causes discord among the members of this Body of Christ, a very serious sin that directly attacks its integrity. Even slight envy, quarrels, dissensions, slander, murmuring, and arrogance (cf. 2 Cor 12:20) are severely rebuked in the Gospel, which affirms that whoever calls his brother a fool is condemned to hell, and commands us to refrain from presenting offerings to God until we have made reparation for faults of this kind (cf. Mt 5:22-24).

Whoever wishes, therefore, to have a share with God, “Let him not shrink from the compact of members; let him not be a rotten member that deserves to be cut off; let him not be a deformed member whereof to be ashamed; let him be a fair, fit, and sound member; let him cleave to the body.”<sup>16</sup>



Leandro Souza

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

*May the Blessed Sacrament, received with fervour and assiduity, be the centre of our lives and the effective King of all hearts*

**May the Eucharist be the centre of our lives!**

“O mystery of piety! O sign of unity! O bond of charity!”<sup>17</sup> exclaimed St. Augustine with full reason, in a transport of love and gratitude for this infinite gift, manifested with such simplicity to all members of the Church.

Well then, let us also make this exclamation our own and draw as close as possible to the Sacrament of the Altar, because there is no greater homage that can be paid to the Creator, nor a better way to thank Him, than to receive Him and nourish ourselves from Him in this formidable mystery.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, there is no greater good for the Holy Church and for the world than the perfect unity of all the faithful in the Truth, the gateway to all heavenly graces and blessings, and the beginning of the defeat of infernal powers.

May the Blessed Sacrament, received with fervour and assiduity, be the centre of our lives and, as soon as possible, also the effective King of all hearts, for the renewal of the face of the earth. ✠

<sup>1</sup> ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n.1.  
<sup>2</sup> Cf. COUNCIL OF TRENT. *Decree on the Eucharist*, c.I: DH 1636.  
<sup>3</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n.5.  
<sup>4</sup> CCC 1396.  
<sup>5</sup> BENEDICT XVI. *Sacramentum caritatis*, n.15.  
<sup>6</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Comentario al Evangelio según San Juan*. Madrid-Buenos Aires: Edibesa; Agape, 2011, v.VIII, p.209-210.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *Comentário ao Evangelho de João*. Homily 26, n.14. São Paulo: Paulus, 2022, v.I, p.611.  
<sup>8</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Doctrina Teologica*. Madrid: Rialp, 1962, p.595.  
<sup>9</sup> Cf. CCC 1391.  
<sup>10</sup> Cf. ST. PETER JULIAN EYMARD. *La Natividad y la Eucaristia*. In: *Obras eucarísticas*. 4.ed. Madrid: Eucaristia, 1963, p.165.  
<sup>11</sup> Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *Sermón 57*. In: *Obras completas*. Madrid: BAC, 1983, v.X, p.137.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. ST. JOHN OF AVILA. O homem e Cristo, uma mesma Pessoa, um só Cristo. In: *Sermões do Santíssimo Sacramento*. São Paulo: Molokai, 2018, p.424; 442.  
<sup>13</sup> ST. PETER JULIAN EYMARD. *La Comunion: Sacramento de unidad*. In: *Obras eucarísticas*, op. cit., p.319.  
<sup>14</sup> Cf. ST. JOHN OF AVILA. Incorporados a Cristo, nossas obras são obras também de Cristo. In: *Sermões do Santíssimo Sacramento*, op. cit., p.215; 218.

<sup>15</sup> ST. IRENAEUS OF LYONS. *Contra as heresias*. L.IV, c.18, n.5. São Paulo: Paulus, 1995, p.423.  
<sup>16</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE, *Comentário ao Evangelho de João*, op. cit., n.13, p.610-611.  
<sup>17</sup> Idem, p.610.  
<sup>18</sup> Cf. FABER, Frederick William. *O Santíssimo Sacramento. As obras e os caminhos de Deus*. São Paulo: Cultor de Livros, 2020, p.463.

## ***“The Teacher is here and is calling for you”***

We who so yearn for eternal happiness, who mourn so much in this vale of tears, forget the place where Heaven – and the Heaven of Heavens, which is God – is imprisoned on earth. This meeting place is called the tabernacle.

✠ **Dcn. Alison Batista de Oliveira, EP**



**W**ho would not want to kneel beside the manger in Bethlehem to adore the Infant Jesus? Or hear a sermon from the Divine Master, receive a glance from Him during His passage through a village in Galilee, see Him arguing with the Pharisees or driving out the money changers in the Temple? Or even be at the foot of His Cross with Mary, His Mother?

Those who think we are deprived of this ineffable company are mistaken. If we truly knew who is enclosed in the tabernacles of our churches, we would exclaim like Jacob: “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it!” (Gn 28:16).

Yes, God is with us and we do not know it. Or rather, we forget... Having promised to remain with us always, until the end of the world (cf. Mt 28:20), Our Lord fulfilled this promise in an unprecedented way by instituting the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

And just as the Redeemer “earnestly desired” (Lk 22:15) to give Himself as food to us when He instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, it was like-

wise with no small benevolence that He prepared a surprise for His children: the adoration of the Sacred Host.

### ***Preparing the ground***

Despite being so precious, this treasure remained practically hidden until the 11th century, when the heresy of Berengarius arose, who opposed the reality of the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>1</sup> Then, as an enthusiastic response to this error, Christendom saw the beginning of a true surge of devotion to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

It was at this time, for example, that the elevation of the consecrated Species during the Mass was given its due importance: everyone wanted to see the Divine Bread and the chalice of the New Covenant at that most sacrosanct of all moments.

In a field so well prepared for Eucharistic devotion, Divine Providence raised up a herald of this renewed piety surrounding the Sacrament of Love.

### ***The messenger of the Eucharist***

The envoy was Juliana, born near Liège, Belgium, in 1193. Orphaned at

a young age and taken in by the Augustinian nuns of Mont-Cornillon, the girl not only flourished in terms of intelligence and mortification, but became herself a living tabernacle of love for the sacred mysteries.

Around the age of sixteen, while immersed in contemplation, a mysterious vision came to her mind: the moon, in all its silvery splendour, bore a small dark crack that split the celestial body in two.

Amazed by that unusual scene, the image frequently returned to her mind during prayer, leading her to think it was a temptation. After years of trial, Christ finally revealed to her that “the moon was the present Church, while the breach in the moon symbolized the absence of a feast, which from now on He desired His faithful on earth to celebrate.”<sup>2</sup>

Then, the Redeemer revealed to her that a commemoration of the institution of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood was needed once a year, in a more solemn way than on Holy Thursday, when the Church gathers to remember the washing of the feet and prepares for the Passion.<sup>3</sup>



For more than twenty years, St. Juliana resisted the divine mission to promote the institution of the feast dedicated to the Eucharist, moved not by negligence, but by a profound awareness of her own unworthiness.

Demonstrating exemplary prudence and avoiding any haste, the nun sought the discernment of the Church before publicizing her visions. Hidden under the veils of anonymity, she entrusted those revelations to Fr. John of Lausanne, whom she considered to be a saint, requesting that he submit them to the scrutiny of eminent theologians. In this way, the holy virgin followed the apostolic model of St. John, who submitted the truth of the spirit to the counsel of others (cf. 1 Jn 4:1).

The ecclesial validation had the favourable opinion of illustrious figures, among them the then Archdeacon of Liège, James of Troyes, versed in divine law and adorned with the merits of holiness, who would later ascend to the pontifical throne as Urban IV. The convergence of opinions among bishops, doctors of the law, and prelates confirmed the inspiration of the Paraclete, who does not contradict Himself when speaking through the mouths of His servants.<sup>4</sup>

Urban IV, moved by the memory of that revelation, as well as by the miracle of Bolsena, promulgated the Bull *Transiurus de hoc mundo*, instituting the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ on August 11, 1264. Thus, the harmony between the mystical experience of St. Juliana and the discernment of the authorities ensured that the proposal for the new solemnity was received as doctrine for the good of the entire Church.

The feast of Corpus Christi then spread throughout the Catholic world

and erased the stain that appeared on the luminous face of the Mystical Body of Christ. It then began to shine like a host without wrinkle or blemish.

### *Heaven imprisoned on earth*

In our days, almost eight centuries after those events, how is the fervour for the Blessed Sacrament?

It is quite true that most churches, scattered by the thousands through-

worshippers of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: “Our century is sick because there is no adoration.”<sup>5</sup>

The same Jesus who walked through Galilee preaching the Good News is present, at the moment the reader’s eyes scan these lines, in the tabernacles. Jesus is there like a prisoner anxiously awaiting the visit of His friends, but to free them from the prison of their evils. And we, who so yearn for eternal happiness, who mourn so much in this vale of tears, forget the place where Heaven – and the Heaven of Heavens, which is God – is imprisoned on earth. This meeting place is called the tabernacle. “The Divine Eucharist,” continues St. Peter Julian Eymard, “is it not Heaven on earth? [...] Therefore, it is not in Heaven that the loving soul should seek Jesus: it is neither the time nor the place for that; but precisely in the Blessed Sacrament.”<sup>6</sup>

Knocking at the door of this august Prisoner, we can receive every gift from the King of the Universe. Just as one who stands under the sun’s rays burns without any other effort than remaining exposed to the sun, so the adorer of the Blessed Sacrament, even remaining still and silent, is transformed into an ember of a censor. His face is illuminated, his gaze becomes clear, for Jesus in the Host lavishes all those who visit Him with benefits, and not even those who say nothing to Him can escape His goodness.

In effect, only those who do not expose themselves to the divine light emanating from the monstrance or tabernacle escape.

### *Jesus sleeping in the boat and its symbolism*

An event recorded in the Gospels (cf. Mt 8:23–27) uses a storm to illus-



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### **The harmony between the mystical experience of St. Juliana and the discernment of the authorities ensured that the proposal for the new solemnity was received as doctrine for the good of the entire Church**

“Vision of St. Juliana of Mont-Cornillon”, by Philippe de Champaigne - Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham (England); on the previous page, tabernacle of St. Paul the Apostle Chapel, Ponta Grossa (Brazil)

out the valleys, islands and mountains in the four corners of the earth, house within them Him whom the universe cannot contain. But how many souls consciously seek Him? He has filled the world with His presence, and we so often empty His sanctuaries with our indifference... St. Peter Julian Eymard, in his time, lamented the absence of



trate the plight of those who, though the Lord is so close at hand, risk throwing everything away.

Jesus was sailing in a boat with His Apostles. Suddenly, the winds begin to whistle, the clouds become leaden and, in a short time, unleash torrents upon the turbulent waves of the sea. Woe to the poor boat! It trembles and sways, creaks and lists, becomes uncontrollable. In the stern, the Divine Master sleeps peacefully, reclining on a pillow... His disciples, more afraid of waking the Lord than of perishing in the waves, try alone to save the vessel from shipwreck. All in vain. They no longer slip on the deck, but swim on it. More than once one or another almost falls into the turbulent waters.

This vessel represents our soul and the Holy Church, which is the Barque of Peter. Not by the strength of the navigators, but by that of the Divine Master who dwells within it, this ship must overcome any turbulence that may come its way. Indeed, waves of persecution assail it, the darkness of all times descends, winds of hatred and slanderous whispers fly through the air. Some disciples slip and are swallowed by dark whirlpools.

Why, in these moments, do we not turn to Jesus? Why do we not seek the solution where it is to be found? Why do we try to save threatened boats with

our own strength, without having recourse to the mighty God, who has the solution for everything?

He is always waiting for us. A few minutes of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament would be enough to transform our souls and calm any storms.

The Sacred Host is like the anchor of our burdened soul and of the Church that fights. It was not without reason that St. John Bosco dreamed that the Ship of Peter was chained to the pillar of the Eucharist.

### ***Our Lord's command and our response***

The Gospel passage continues:

“And they went and woke Him [Jesus], saying, ‘Save, Lord; we are perishing.’” (Mt 8:25). He, “rose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm” (Mt 8:26).

They only had to seek Him, and a word of His dispersed those waves. The disciples were amazed: “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey Him?” (Mt 8:27) He is the Cap-

tain of the Church. He is the One who calls us when we struggle in the waves; He is the One who, when called upon, silences the storm.

“The Teacher is here and is calling for you” (Jn 11:28). This is the invitation that is continually made to us. From within the tabernacles or exposed in the monstrance, Jesus, who needs nothing, asks for our presence.

And we, shall we deprive ourselves of such august company? ❖

<sup>1</sup> Cf. DH 690.

<sup>2</sup> THE LIFE OF JULIANA OF CORNILLON. In: MULDER-BAKKER, Anneke B. (Ed.). *Living Saints of the Thirteenth Century*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011, p.234.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Idem, *ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Idem, p.235-238.

<sup>5</sup> BLESSED PETER JULIAN EYMARD. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Eucarística, 1953, p.544.

<sup>6</sup> ST. PETER JULIAN EYMARD. *Escritos espirituais*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1956, v.II, p.192.



**The Sacred Host is like the anchor of our burdened soul and of the Church that fights against the winds of hatred and the waves of persecution**

To the left, “Christ in the storm on the Sea of Galilee”, by Rembrandt - Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (Massachusetts); above, Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caieiras (Brazil)



# Does the Eucharist Prevent Future Sins?



✠ Fr. Mario Beccar Varela, EP

“Prevention is better than cure,” as the proverb says. Whether in the field of medicine or security, prevention is considered the best way to avoid illnesses and incidents. Any intervention is always more traumatic than precautionary actions.

From the outset, Divine Providence provided for the existence of life on this planet, arranging everything by “measure and number and weight”

(Wis 11:20). Since man is a “social animal” and endowed with intelligence, God also offered him the means to live in community, with a view to mutual assistance in obtaining food, housing, clothing, etc., as well as in defence from external attacks.

St. Thomas Aquinas (cf. *Summa Theologiae* III, q.79, a.6) asserts that the Eucharist, like bodily food, strengthens our soul against spiritual death. Indeed, would He who provided superabundant means for the maintenance of bodily life on this earth, not do the same to prevent the death of the soul?

One of the effects of the Sacrament of the Altar consists precisely in the preservation from spiritual death: “This is the Bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die” (Jn 6:50). Aquinas explains this compelling passage: “Sin is the spiritual death of the soul. Hence man is preserved from future sin in the same way as the body is preserved from future death of the body” (a.6).

The Eucharist defends the life of the soul as a powerful weapon that repels the attacks of the devil: “it is a sign of Christ’s Passion, whereby the devils are conquered” (a.6).

Moreover, the Angelic Doctor teaches that, just as the Creator provided food and remedies in nature to pre-

serve the body from corruption, so too did He want the Eucharist to strengthen the heart of man (cf. Ps 104:15) to avoid the evil inclinations that lead to the perishing of the soul.

However, just as the effectiveness of a medicine depends on the state of health of the patient, the “Bread which comes down from Heaven” (Jn 6:51) diminishes the inclination to evil in proportion to individual dispositions, for “the effect of this Sacrament is received according to man’s condition” (ad 1). Consequently, it is up to each one to make the greatest possible use of this sublime gift!

St. Thomas further warns that, “although this Sacrament of itself has the power of preserving from sin, yet it does not take away from man the possibility of sinning” (ad 1).

The analogy with bodily medicines makes this reality even more understandable: their usefulness is proportionate to the greater or lesser disposition of the patient.

Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ also brings about an increase in charity. Therefore, *ipso facto*, it diminishes the attraction to sin and “directly strengthens man’s heart in good; whereby he is also preserved from sin” (ad 3).

Just as the natural impulse for survival makes us love life and reject what threatens it, the Eucharist provides us with a desire for God by which we adhere to good and reject evil. Blessed are those in whom the “supernatural instinct for self-preservation” is intense and active! ✠

**The Eucharist preserves us from spiritual death, and like a powerful weapon, it repels the attacks of the devil**

The Sacred Heart of Jesus - Basilica of the Conception of Our Lady, Madrid (Spain)

Eric Salas / Licio César Rodríguez





# August Mystery, Prefigured from the Beginning

Like a splendid dawn, the sun of the Eucharist gradually begins to glimmer through the mists of the Old Testament, until shining forth as the most sublime Sacrament.



✦ **Nicolle Ouverney**

**T**he Bible is still today the most widely read and circulated book in the world; however, its deepest meaning always remains unknown. Uninterrupted years of study would be insufficient to encompass all the wisdom contained in those sublime pages. And why is that? Because the principal Author of the Holy Scripture is God Himself, infinite and eternal, whose designs are inscrutable and whose thoughts are as far above ours as Heaven is from earth (cf. Is 55:8-9)!

Thus, human superficiality often considers certain biblical facts to be commonplace, as well as certain ancient Jewish customs. In the light of faith, however, they possess great supernatural and symbolic value.

In fact, the Scriptures can be compared to a sacred chest from which we draw “what is new and what is old” (Mt 13:52), and in which we find narratives that are filled with meaning when analysed in the light of Christ’s Revelation, helping us to better under-

stand the treasures received in the maternal bosom of the Holy Church.

The reader will be able to appreciate this reality in the following paragraphs. Various episodes from Sacred History will be recalled, many of them somewhat enigmatic, but which acquire special significance when correlations are established with the unique and supreme gift of faith.

### *Life and immortality enclosed in a fruit*

Narrating the work of the six days, Genesis portrays the moment when, having planted a garden in Eden, the Lord introduced man into it and caused all sorts of trees of pleasing appearance and excellent fruit to sprout from the earth; He placed “the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9).

In His infinite wisdom, the Creator allowed Adam to eat of all the fruits of the garden, except those that sprouted from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; otherwise, he would certainly die (cf. Gen 2:16-17). The Serpent, however, the most cunning of animals, approaching Eve suggested that she taste the fruit: “You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you



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**The deepest meaning of the Bible always remains unknown. Uninterrupted years of study would be insufficient to encompass all the wisdom contained in its sublime pages. And why is this?**

Passage from the Book of Isaiah in Hebrew, Qumran manuscript - Museum of Israel, Jerusalem

will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:4-5). The result is already known: the woman yielded to temptation, and then the first man. Sinning by pride, our first parents disobeyed God and were expelled from Paradise.<sup>1</sup>

Now, immediately after this deplorable episode, Scripture narrates that “the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever’” (Gen 3:22); He appointed “the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen 3:24).

An impenetrable mystery! Almighty God wished to hide the superhuman gift of immortality in a simple plant matter. Why would He have done so?

### ***“The Lord had regard for his offering”***

In the Book of Genesis, it is written that Adam and Eve initially had two sons: Cain and Abel, who became respectively a farmer and a shepherd. When presenting sacrifices to the Lord, the first offered fruits of the earth, while the second offered the firstborn of his flock.

“The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering He had no regard” (Gen 4:4-5). This is because, while Cain presented God with the remnants of his harvest, his brother dedicated the best animals to Him, reserving nothing for himself. Shortly afterward, Abel was murdered out fraternal envy and received into the eternal dwellings as the first of all the righteous; his soul was presented before God as a holocaust offering, crowning the pleasing sacrifice he had just offered.



**The principal Author of the Holy Scripture is God Himself, infinite and eternal, whose designs are inscrutable**

“Christ in majesty”, by Giovanni da Milano - Pinacoteca of Brera, Milan (Italy)

Perfect in all His actions, the Creator then established a moving dialogue with Cain. He, who had not protected innocent Abel from death, marked his wicked brother, the fratricide, with a sign on his forehead, so that no one would attempt to take his life (cf. Gen 4:15).

### ***A priest shrouded in the mists of mystery***

A little later, in the early days of the epic of the patriarchs, another happening draws our attention. Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, appears in the pages of Sacred History.

A mysterious figure, “without father or mother or genealogy,” whose life “has neither beginning of days nor end” (Heb 7:3), he was introduced by God

into the life of Abraham when the latter was crossing the Valley of Shaveh, property of the king of Sodom, after rescuing Lot from the hands of the Canaanite kings. In an unusual manner, before blessing the holy patriarch, he ordered that “bread and wine” (Gen 14:18) be brought.

Now, at that time, it was customary to offer animals to God, sacrificed with the shedding of blood. Melchizedek was the first to present bread and wine; however, Scripture is silent about the reason for this choice.

### ***A distressing challenge, faithfully fulfilled***

Shortly afterward, despite his advanced age and his wife’s barrenness, Abraham had a son, the fruit of God’s promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sands of the seashore (cf. Gen 21:5; 22:17). The Lord then wanted to test him: “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen 22:2).

At first glance, the request seems overly audacious, even contrary to natural law, according to which a father never harms a child, but rather tends to give his own life to protect him. Moreover, Isaac was the fulfillment of God’s promise: Abraham loved him not only as a son, but also as a gift from Heaven, a pledge of his covenant with God! The Lord could have chosen any other type of trial to test the faith of his chosen one; however, for most wise reasons, He wished to subject him to this agonizing challenge, incomprehensible to human understanding.

Faithful to the divine will, at the height of his faith and trust in the Almighty, the holy ancient ascended to the



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Photos: Francisco Lecaros



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mountaintop, built an altar, placed the wood, and bound his only-begotten son upon it; then he raised the knife, ready to consummate the holocaust, when the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: “Abraham, Abraham! [...]” “Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Gen 22:11-12). And by his proceeding, the first patriarch won God’s blessing for himself and all his posterity.

***A sign of salvation: The blood of the lamb***

In the Book of Exodus, before inflicting of the tenth plague upon Egypt – the death of the firstborn – which would ultimately obtain Pharaoh’s permission for the people to leave his land, the Lord prescribed the celebration of Passover to Moses and Aaron, to be repeated every year as a perpetual institution.

A lamb was to be sacrificed per family, and if the family was too small to eat it, it should be shared with the neighbour, leaving nothing for the next day. Furthermore, the animal had to be without blemish, male, and one year old. The doorposts of each house would be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificed lamb, which would serve as a sign to ward off the destroying Angel (cf. Ex 12:3-13). And so it was done.

That night, the firstborns of the Egyptians were killed one by one, while the firstborns of the Hebrews remained unscathed, protected by the blood of the lamb (cf. Ex 12:29-30).

***Bread from the heavens above***

With the people were in the desert on their way to the promised land,

many began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, saying, “Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger” (Ex 16:3). To which the Lord replied: “I will rain bread from Heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day. [...] I have heard the murmurings of the people of Israel; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God’” (Ex 16:4, 12).

Indeed, the following morning the Jews found a layer of dew on the desert floor which, once evaporated, revealed “a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground” (Ex 16:14). Since they did not know what it was, Moses told them: “It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat” (Ex 16:15).

The Israelites then named this food manna and ate it for forty years (cf. Ex 16:31, 35), until they could eat of the fruits of the land in the land of Canaan (cf. Jos 5:12).

***The prefigures are fulfilled***

“*Ecce Panis Angelorum* – Behold the Bread of Angels,” sings the Holy Church in ecstasy in one of the stanzas of the hymn *Lauda Sion*, composed by St. Thomas Aquinas for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. In this inestimable gift of the Eucharist, each of the prefigures considered so far – and still others, which would exceed the scope of an article – is truly fulfilled: “It is in the form of symbolic figures, it is through the intentional obscurity of the prophet-

**Under the form of symbolic figures, the truths of the faith reveal themselves progressively, as the faint rays of the dawn announce the radiant sun of mid-day**

From top to bottom : detail of “The sacrifice of Cain and of Abel”, by Mariotto Albertinelli - Fogg Museum, Cambridge (Massachusetts); “The sacrifice of Isaac”, by Frans Francken II - Santa Cruz Museum, Toledo (Spain); “Abraham and Melchizedek”, by Maarten de Vos - Soumaya Museum, Mexico City; “Gathering manna” - Museum of the Chartreuse of Douai (France)



In this inestimable gift of the Eucharist, each of these prefigures finds its real significance

Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caeiras (Brazil)

Leandro Souza

ic texts, that the truth [about the Eucharist] is progressively revealed, just as the sun, before appearing radiant on the horizon, reveals itself through glimmers of light, at first barely perceptible, then more pronounced and, finally, fully apparent.”<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the first of the figures, the *tree of life*, is explained in relation to the Sacrament of the Altar through the words of the Saviour: “he who eats my Flesh and drinks my Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:54). The Eucharist is the true Tree of Life, which has taken root again in a paradise that is immensely more fertile, beautiful, and rich: the Holy Church.

As for the *sacrifice of Abel*, pleasing to God, it symbolizes divine acceptance of the Sacrifice of the Cross, renewed in the Holy Mass, whose acceptance by God the Liturgy implores in Eucharistic Prayer I, also called the Roman Canon: “as once You were pleased to accept the gifts of Your servant Abel the just.”

In the *immolation of Isaac* we find a clear allusion to the immolation that the Eternal Father made of His Divine

Son on Calvary. Now, the fact that it was an unbloody immolation, fully realized in intention but not consummated, more closely prefigures the mystery of the Eucharist, in which the sacrifice of the Cross is also renewed in an unbloody manner.

The *sacrifice of Melchizedek*, inspired by the Holy Spirit, contained in the offering of bread and wine, exact figures of the matter of the Eucharist, which truly obtains divine gifts for those who receive it with the proper dispositions. The paschal lamb, on the other hand, was a figure of the Eucharistic substance, Christ Himself, the true victim who freed us, at the price of His blood, from the slavery of the devil.

Finally, the *manna* represents the Sacrament of the Altar as the Bread of Angels, which has all flavours and is suited to every taste (cf. Wis 16:20-21), that is, it contains within itself the source of grace that adapts itself to each soul and satisfies all with the fullness of spiritual goods. It is our daily food, sustaining us during our pilgrimage in this land of exile, just as manna sustained the Jews during their journey through the desert.

**Let us never neglect such a precious gift.**

If the manna prefigured the Eucharist, the reality surrounding it also brings us a precious point of reflection: at a certain point, the Israelites were satiated with the manna and complained against God because of it (cf. Num 11); is it not, then, that in our days many Catholics receive the Bread of Life with bad dispositions, and others still reject this most precious supernatural sustenance given by the Heavenly Father, which is the very Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of his Only-begotten Son?

Let us pray to the Virgin Mary, the first and most ardent devotee of the Eucharist, that She may obtain for us a sincere, fervent and increasing love for Jesus in the Eucharist, and deliver us from receiving Him with lukewarmness, negligence or carelessness. ✠

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.163, a.1; ad 1.

<sup>2</sup> DEVAUX, Prosper. *L'Eucharistie à travers les siècles*. Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1919, p.2. The explanations for each of the prefigures of the Eucharist discussed in this article were taken from the same book.



# To the Rescue of Jesus

God the Creator became a prisoner, the Almighty made Himself delicate and vulnerable... What did He not submit to for our love? You who love Him, defend Him and, if necessary, rescue Him!

✦ Sr. María José Feliz



**T**here are certain souls who, through no merit of their own, but simply by a gratuitous design of Providence, are endowed with singular gifts and extraordinary charisms, whose effects surpass the limitations of nature in such an evident way that it is impossible to deny their supernatural origin.

One such person was born in the small town of Cossé-en-Champagne, France, on July 16, 1901. Yvonne Beauvais was her name, and she received from God numerous mystical gifts, including bilocation and glossolalia, with a view to a sublime mission that would be entrusted to her by divine love.

## A highly chosen soul

Yvonne had an ordinary childhood, marked from the age of three by financial difficulties due to the premature death of her father. In 1922, at the age of twenty-one, she became seriously ill and was sent to a hospital in Malestroit, Brittany, cared for by Augustinian nuns, where she convalesced for almost six months.

During this period, she awakened to the mystical life and religious vocation. On March 18, 1927, having overcome several obstacles, she finally entered the Augustinian convent, taking the name by which she would become known: Yvonne-Aimée de Jésus.

Due to the great discretion Yvonne kept regarding her mystical gifts, it is not known exactly when her biloca-

tions began. What is certain is that Providence granted her this privilege especially for a mission: to rescue the profaned Blessed Sacrament throughout the world.

Indeed, the gift of bilocation – witnessed to in the history of extraordinary mystical phenomena from St. Ambrose and Mary of Agreda to Don Bosco, Padre Pio, and other contemporaries – consists of the ability to be in two places at the same time; more precisely, to appear or act at a distance, while the physical body remains where it was at the beginning of the bilocation.

There are records of at least 151 such events in Yvonne's life,<sup>1</sup> in many

of which she recovered consecrated Hosts from the hands of sacrilegious individuals in different French cities and even more distant places, such as Germany and England.

## First reported expeditions

The first witnessed records of these supernatural expeditions date back to 1923, therefore before her entry into religious life. On April 23 of that year, during a stay in Malestroit, Yvonne confided to a nun that, during the early morning, she bilocated to a residence and rang the doorbell. To the lady who answered, she simply said she had “come for the Host.” The lady of the house then led her to the living room and handed her the consecrated Host. “Inspired by Jesus, Yvonne spoke with this woman for half an hour and, the next day, she recognized her need for Confession.”<sup>2</sup>

Another time, Our Lord called upon Yvonne to rescue Him from a woman who, for some days, had kept a Host received unworthily during Mass. She went to the house of this sacrilegious woman and, as soon as she found her, revealed the reason for her visit. The woman paled in surprise, but quickly handed over the Blessed Sacrament without difficulty, and Yvonne then exhorted her about the seriousness of that sin and the need for conversion. After which she shed tears of sincere repentance.<sup>3</sup>

But not all missions were so simple... Once, for example, after a nine-



**Yvonne was a young lady when she began to awaken to the mystical life**

The young Yvonne Beauvais

ty-three-kilometre train journey, from which she miraculously returned in moments, Yvonne managed with great difficulty to accomplish her goal, as she recounts: “I was not able to go unscathed while rescuing the outraged Host from the hands of that poor soul. I had the impression of having a real demon before me, such was the hatred manifest in her expression.”<sup>4</sup>

### *A wicked man, overcome by grace*

Sometimes, angelic manifestations accompanied her expeditions. Having been mysteriously transported to another city, one hundred and seventy kilometres from Malestroit, Yvonne found herself beside a waiting car. “An Angel was driving it, without a doubt,” she later commented. The vehicle left her in front of a house in the suburbs and then disappeared.

The man who answered the door confessed that he believed in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and that it was hatred against God that moved him to commit sacrileges. He intended to take consecrated Hosts to places of desecration in Paris; and he mocked Yvonne when he heard her admonitions. He was, as she noted, possessed by a demon. Firmly, the nun demanded that the desecrator indicate the hiding place of the Hosts, and he obeyed reluctantly.

“This has never brought me misfortune,” he pondered.

“It may happen soon,” Yvonne replied.

After rescuing the Hosts, the Augustinian nun felt Jesus speak through her and commanded:

“Kneel down and make an act of contrition!”

Thankful for the grace, the unfortunate man knelt, prayed... and broke down, sobbing. Jesus had conquered him.

### *“I came from France just to get it”*

On several occasions, even before entering the convent, Yvonne exer-

cized the gift of glossolalia, the ability to speak unknown languages, to save the Sacred Body of Jesus.

One night, lying in bed with a high fever, she found herself transported to a house in Germany. She rang the doorbell and asked in German – a language she did not know – for the lady of the house, without yet knowing what Jesus’ will was with the visit. The words came to her lips at just the right moment.<sup>6</sup>

“I came to get the Host that you keep at home. Jesus Himself told me, and I came from France just to get it.”

To verify if she was really telling the truth, the woman spoke to her in French. Yvonne responded naturally, leaving her speechless with astonishment. After composing herself, she asked the young mystic to leave, but the latter was quicker: informed by Our Lord that the consecrated Host was in a glass cabinet, inside a small box, she ran to retrieve it.

Realizing she had been discovered, the woman rushed to grab the key to the cabinet, but it flew into Yvonne’s hands, who recovered the Host and pressed it to her chest. Fleeing the attacks of the profaner, she ran out of the house and began walking through the streets, until she lost consciousness and found herself back in her bed, fast asleep.

### *A sacrilegious priest*

Besides these touching rescues, Providence also entrusted Yvonne with other missions, intended to benefit certain souls.

Mother Madeleine, superior of the Malestroit convent, recounts: “We witnessed the death of a wicked priest in Yvonne’s cell.”<sup>7</sup> The bilocation, however, had a peculiarity: the nun had been transported to Paris, to be with the dying man, and he seemed to be in her body and spoke through her lips. Mother Madeleine, thus seeing the priest’s gestures and hearing his words, was able to follow what was happening in the French capital.



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### **Yvonne received countless supernatural gifts, for the defence of the Blessed Sacrament**

Yvonne-Aimée de Jésus

Yvonne already knew this priest, for in other circumstances she had rescued Hosts that the unfortunate man had been consecrating in black Masses for nine years. To prevent the rescue, the sacrilegious priest had even tried to kill her!... This time, however, she had been sent to prevent his eternal damnation.

Distraught, the dying man gasped: “I am a criminal... I consecrated to do sacrilege for nine years... Oh, those Black Masses!... For mockery ... What sacrilege!” Yvonne inspired him with words of mercy, but he claimed to hate God and excused himself, assuring her that there was no priest nearby to hear his Confession, as he would die in a few minutes. The young mystic continued trying to calm him, speaking to him of God’s infinite clemency, capable of forgiving any sins through sincere repentance and a firm purpose of amend-



**At that moment, Yvonne and her confessor saw a bleeding Host resting on the branch of a tree, and she registered the occurrence with a photograph**

Photographs taken by Yvonne at the moment When the Host came to rest on the tree, in the hands of Fr. Paul and in the oratory, in front of Our Lady's statue

ment. The struggle was arduous, and it seemed that the wretch would succumb to the temptation of despair and final impenitence when, at the last instant, he managed to stammer: "Forgive me, my God!" Then he expired.

Yvonne then recovered consciousness. A few minutes later, she had an ecstasy and saw the priest burning in the flames of Purgatory.

***"Heaven visited the earth"***

One of the most impressive events in Yvonne's life occurred on September 16, 1941.<sup>8</sup> She was visiting Fr. Paul Labutte, her confessor and his relatives at the relatives home in La Brardière. While she was taking photographs in the garden, they suddenly heard the nun exclaim in dismay.

Fr. Paul came without delay and heard her cry: "Oh! The Host! They are desecrating it! They are piercing it with a stiletto! Oh! It is bleeding!" It was a sacrilege perpetrated in Paris. Yvonne then addressed her Guardian Angel, whom she called *Lumen*, and

said to him: "I want that Host... *Lumen*, go and get Jesus!"

At that moment, Fr. Paul recounts, they saw something white passing over the top of a large oak tree: it was a Host carried by a ray of light, descending gently towards a young pine tree. They ran and found the Host on a branch just below the top of the tree, within reach. It was small, like those distributed to the faithful, and it was pierced in the middle, with a little blood flowing from the perforation. After a few minutes of silence and adoration, Yvonne-Aimée went for her camera and photographed the Host. Then she placed it on a green leaf, held by Father Paul like a corporal, on which the Host remained upright... This was recorded in a second photograph.

Finally, the Host was taken to a rustic cabin that served as an oratory and placed at the feet of an image of Our Lady.<sup>9</sup> At some point, the candles around the image lit by themselves, without human intervention. And shortly afterwards Yvonne and

Fr. Paul saw a mysterious inscription appear, letter by letter, above the door: "Heaven visited the earth," which was also photographed.

***Let us repay love with love!***

The life of Yvonne-Aimée, marked by numerous mystical phenomena and especially devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, was filled with other beautiful occurrences too numerous to relate in this brief article.

The few we have just meditated on, however, show us well the immensity of the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ for us. Not even the knowledge of the horrors that would be committed throughout history against the Sacrament of the Altar were able to dissuade Him from the determination to remain with us until the end of the world, in the Sacred Species!

Let us, then, repay love with love. May our boundless gratitude and our burning love repair the coldness, indifference, and outrages committed against the Blessed Sacrament. ✠

<sup>1</sup> Cf. LAURENTIN, René; MAHÉO, Patrick. *Bilocations de Mère Yvonne-Aimée. Étude critique en référence à ses missions*. 2.ed. Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. LABUTTE, Paul. *Yvonne-Aimée. "Ma mère selon l'Esprit"*. 2.ed. Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 1997, p.204-205.

<sup>4</sup> LAURENTIN, René. *Biographie d'Yvonne-Aimée de Male-*

*stroit (1901-1951)*. 3.ed. Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2010, v.II, p.141.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. LAURENTIN; MAHÉO, op. cit., p.15-16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. LABUTTE, op. cit., p.538-540.

<sup>9</sup> It was a contemporary replica of the Virgin of the Smile, of St. Therese of the Child Jesus.



# How to Honour the Holy Eucharist?

## CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§ 1387 To prepare for worthy reception of this Sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church. Bodily demeanour (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest.

**T**his paragraph from the *Catechism* urges us to prepare ourselves adequately for receiving the Holy Eucharist, highlighting three important aspects.

Firstly, as Pius XII recalls in the Apostolic Constitution *Christus Dominus*, it was customary since the fourth century to distribute Holy Communion to the faithful while fasting. The Councils of Hippo, in 393, and the Third Council of Carthage, in 397, had already stipulated that it was necessary to abstain from all food for a certain period before the Eucharistic Celebration.

Due to changes in contemporary society, in 1953 the same Pope reduced the traditional fasting time for receiving the Eucharist, which began at midnight, to three hours in certain circumstances. Later, in 1964, Paul VI<sup>1</sup> prescribed the rule of one hour of fasting in preparation for receiving Holy Communion, with the exception of the consumption of water and medicine, as remains the case today.<sup>2</sup> Priests who celebrate two or three Masses on the same day may eat between them; The elderly, the sick, and their caregivers are exempt from fasting.<sup>3</sup>

These mitigations aimed to facilitate the participation of the faithful in the Sacred Banquet, especially in evening Masses. In this way, the didactic character of the praxis remained un-



Thiago Ferreira

**Imitating Mary, we should approach  
Communion with love,  
piety and devotion**

Communion during Holy Mass in the  
Chapel of Our Lady of the Pillar,  
Ubatuba (Brazil)

changed. Indeed, it is a disciplinary disposition that aims to prepare the body and mind for the reception of the Bread of Angels.

Secondly, the article points to a certain “bodily demeanour,” signifying that the faithful need to present themselves and behave during the Eucharistic rites in accordance with the magnificence of the act. Decent and respectable attire, sacred silence, and genuflections are not vain gestures and useless practices arbitrarily imposed by the Church. On the contrary, they are expressions of piety, reverence, and praise that predispose the faithful to an active participation in the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>5</sup> observes that the worship of *latría* requires external acts. Through these expressions, we give thanks to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and acknowledge that He, by offering Himself in the Sacred Species, manifests to us an infinite love.

The expression “Christ becomes our guest” highlights the bond of divine intimacy established with our Redeemer. Now, in order for this “stay” in the temple of our souls to produce true spiritual joy, it is necessary that we be in friendship with God, that is, free from all mortal sin, as St. Paul vehemently exhorts (cf. 1 Cor 11:27-29).

Let us therefore pray to Mary Most Holy, whose womb formed the very Body and Blood of Christ, that She may always obtain for us the grace to receive her beloved Son in the Eucharist with the same dispositions of love, piety, and devotion as her Immaculate Heart. ✠

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ST. PAUL VI. *Tempus eucharistici ieiunium servandi reducitur*: AAS 57 (1965), 186.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. CIC, can. 919 § 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. idem, § 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n.30.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.81, a.7.



## “Other Christs”

There is no Eucharist without priesthood, nor true priesthood without Eucharist, for there is no sacrifice without someone able to offer it, nor an offerer without a victim to be immolated.



✠ Fr. Carlos Javier Werner, EP

**T**he Holy Scriptures present Jesus Christ as the High Priest of the New and Eternal Covenant, established by God through His Most Precious Blood shed on the Cross. The Epistle to the Hebrews affirms this categorically; the Apocalypse represents Him in prophetic language, using symbolic figures; other New Testament writings manifest this when recounting the most prominent events in the life of Our Lord, especially when narrating His “Hour” or His

“Passover,” that is, His passage from this world to the Father.

### *Perfect Priest and Immaculate Victim*

The Letter to the Hebrews declares that Christ is “a merciful and faithful High Priest” (Heb 2:17), who atones for the sins of the world. And comparing His priesthood with that of the Old Testament, it testifies that He “passed through the heavens” (Heb 4:14), where He remains because He pos-

sesses an eternal priesthood, therefore able to save definitively those who through Him approach God, for He is always alive to intercede for them (cf. Heb 7:24-25).

In short, Jesus is “holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests [of the Old Law], to offer sacrifices daily, [...] He did this once for all when He offered up Himself” (Heb 7:26-27).

Therefore, Christians enjoy the favour of a High Priest “who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in Heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord” (Heb 8:1-2). In it, He presents not the blood of goats or calves, but His own Blood, whose sanctifying power is incalculable (cf. Heb 9:13-14).

From this it follows that Our Lord brought His priesthood to perfection, offering a sacrifice of infinite value by giving Himself up to death, even death on a Cross (cf. Phil 2:8). He Himself was the Victim of His priesthood! The priestly office thus reached an unsurpassed apex, for there cannot be a holier priest, nor a more pleasing victim, nor a more effective sacrifice.

Christ, in His ineffable kindness, willed that some of His chosen disciples should participate in this sublime and eternal new priesthood, as His

**In the Last Supper, the Eternal High Priest made the offering of Himself in a sacramental way, instituting the liturgical form of His sacrifice and of His presence in the Sacred Eucharist**

“Last Supper” - Ayacucho (Peru)



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ministers, from generation to generation, until the end of time. Now, what does this participation involve?

### *The liturgy of Calvary*

The ancient priests performed ritual sacrifices, symbols of the Redeemer's future sacrifice, and represented, above all, by the lamb sacrificed during the Jewish Passover. Our Lord, in a different way, wished to offer Himself, raised on the wood of the Cross on the mountain called Golgotha, on the outskirts of the city of Jerusalem.

This was a bloody and real sacrifice, testified to this day by the vestiges in the Holy Shroud of Turin, which undeniably records the wounds of the nails, the lacerations from the scourging, and the marks of the crowning with thorns. Furthermore, Jesus did not neglect the ritual aspect and wanted His sacrifice to constitute a sacred liturgy.

At the Last Supper, anticipating His martyrdom, the Eternal High Priest made the sacramental offering of Himself, transubstantiating the bread into His Flesh and the wine into His Blood. He thus instituted the liturgical form of His sacrifice and His presence: the Holy Eucharist.

It is impossible to conceive of a greater gift! It is something so admirable that it becomes difficult to assimilate it. He bequeathed His sacrifice to us with such propriety that the priest prays at every Mass: "Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours..." Yes, the oblation of Jesus on the Cross is "ours." What more can one desire or imagine?

At the same time, He left us His real and substantial presence, another gift of infinite value. The promise of His

permanence among men until the end of time is fulfilled in every tabernacle. Jesus is there is! His most sacred Heart is there, throbbing with love for every human being!

### *Origin of the Catholic priesthood*

Along with the Blessed Eucharist, the priesthood of the New Covenant



Leandro Souza

**The priest receives the immense gift of acting in the Person of Christ, taking His place and participating in His power, in order to renew His one sacrifice for the benefit of the entire Church**

Eucharistic celebration in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Caeiras (Brazil)

was instituted: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Lk 22:19). Our Lord wished to leave us His Body and Blood as a sacrifice, as food and as presence, and for this He made some of His disciples participants in His priesthood, charged by Him with celebrating the sacred liturgy of the Cross in a sacramental way.

Thus was born the Catholic priesthood, adorned with the power to re-

new, through the celebration of Holy Mass, the holocaust of Christ on the altars, offering the divine Bread and precious Blood as an oblation of sweet fragrance to the Father, and a sacrifice of communion for the faithful who receive Him as spiritual food and drink.

It can therefore be safely stated that there is no Eucharist without priesthood nor true priesthood without Eucharist, since there is no sacrifice without someone able to offer it, nor offerer without a victim to be immolated.

For this reason, St. John Paul II, in the Apostolic Letter *Dominicæ Cenæ*, reminds priests: "The ministerial and hierarchical priesthood [...] [is] in the closest relationship with the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the principal and central *raison d'être* of the Sacrament of the Priesthood, which effectively came into being at the moment of the institution of the Eucharist, and together with it. [...] Through our ordination – the celebration of which is linked to the holy Mass from the very first liturgical evidence – we are united in a singular and exceptional way to the Eucharist. In a certain way we derive from it and exist for it. We are also, and in a special way, responsible for it – each priest in his own community and each bishop."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, each priest receives the immense gift of acting in the Person of Christ, taking His place and participating in His power, in order to renew His unique sacrifice for the benefit of the whole Church. The fruit of this renewal is Christ truly present in the Eucharist, adored by Christians in tabernacles throughout the world.

Called to full identification with Christ

The priesthood is an exalted vocation, freely granted, not in view of human merits or abilities, but of God’s merciful election. Each priest is a fruit of the Father’s will, whom the faithful implore to send new workers into His vineyard (cf. Mt 20:1-16).

This must be taken seriously into consideration, both by the faithful – who must see this calling in the priest and respect it with veneration – and by the priests themselves, who must first and foremost be fully aware of their vocation, allowing themselves to be transformed inwardly by what it signifies, namely, God’s predilection and the very high responsibility for which they will have to give an account before Him and the Church.

For this reason, of the ordained priest is demanded an extraordinary holiness, commensurate with the gift he has received, as Pius XI teaches: “The Eucharistic Sacrifice in which the Immaculate Victim who taketh away the sins of the world is immolated, requires in a special way that the priest, by a holy and spotless life, should make himself as far as he can, less unworthy of God, to whom he daily offers that adorable Victim, the very Word of God incarnate for love of us. ‘Realize what you are doing, and imitate what you handle,’ says the Church through the bishop to the deacons as they are about to be consecrated priests.”<sup>2</sup>

The same Pontiff concludes that, by virtue of being an instrument of our Redeemer, the priest is called to full identification with Christ; he

even affirms that he must be “another Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

St. Pius X, in recommending to priests the practice of daily meditation to persevere in chaste love for the Lord and progress on the paths of holiness, also points out as a primary theme to

and manifested in a pastoral charity marked by the sincere gift of self. It is not a matter of inventing new models or redefining the identity we have received, but of proposing again, with renewed intensity, the priesthood in its most authentic core – being *alter Christus* – allowing Him to shape our lives, unify our hearts, and give form to a ministry lived from intimacy with God, faithful dedication to the Church, and concrete service to the people entrusted to us.”<sup>5</sup>

What is required of a priest?

Called to be “*alter Christus*,” the priest must imitate the example and virtues of the Lord Jesus, especially in his interior dispositions when celebrating Holy Mass, as St. Pius X teaches: “As His ministers in the august sacrifice which, with eternal wonder, is renewed for the life of the world, we must have the same disposition of mind with which He, on the altar of the Cross, offered Himself to God as an immaculate sacrifice. For, in ancient times – when there was only a shadow and a figure of the true sacrifice – so much holiness was demanded of sacred ministers, how just will it be to demand it now that the victim is Christ?”<sup>6</sup>

Herein lies the great responsibility of the clergy: through a serious, intense, and vigilant spiritual life, to strive to increase the sacramental grace received on the day of their ordination. This grace invites and at the same time favours the granting of continuous supernatural aids so that the priest may imitate the charity that inflamed the Divine Heart of Christ, Priest and Victim, given up in the sacrosanct martyr-



Ordained ministers should, therefore, unite their hearts to that of Mary Most Holy, so as to be, through her infallible intercession, one and the same priest and victim with Jesus

Our Lady of the most Blessed Sacrament – Church of Sts. Claudius and Andrew of the Burgundians, Rome

be considered by priests: that of always keeping present in their minds, night and day, the singular grace of the priestly vocation, the call to be “another Christ.”

Recently, Pope Leo XIV recalled this same principle, addressing the clergy of Madrid:

“[Priests are] men configured to Christ, capable of exercising their ministry from a living relationship with Him, nourished by the Eucharist

## A MAN OF PRAYER AND GENUINELY DEVOTED TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST

**W**hile an essential part of the Church's work of evangelization is to teach men and women to pray to the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit, new evangelization entails the recovery and consolidation of pastoral practices which manifest belief in the real presence of Our Lord under the eucharistic species.

"The priest has a mission to promote the cult of the eucharistic presence, also outside of the celebration of the Mass, thereby making of his own church a Christian 'house of prayer'" (St. John Paul II. *General Audience*, 12/5/1993).

The faithful, first of all, should be well instructed with regard to the indispensable conditions for the reception of Holy Communion. It is also important to encourage their devotion to Christ who lovingly awaits them in the tabernacle.

A simple but effective form of eucharistic catechesis is the mate-

rial care of everything concerned with the church and especially the altar and tabernacle: cleanliness and decor, worthy vestments and vessels, care in celebrating the liturgical ceremonies, the faithful practice of the genuflection etc.

Moreover, an atmosphere of recollection should pervade the Blessed Sacrament chapel. This is a centuries-old tradition guaranteeing that silence which facilitates dialogue with the Lord.

The heart of our churches is the Blessed Sacrament chapel or the area in which the Eucharistic Christ is reserved and adored. For this reason, access to it should be evident and easily facilitated. It should be open for as much of the day as possible and it should be well decorated.

It is clear that all these are signs deriving not from some form of vague "spiritualism" but they reveal a well tested theological tradition of

devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. They are possible only if the priest is a man of prayer and genuinely devoted to the Holy Eucharist.

Only the pastor who prays will know how to teach others to pray and be able to bring God's grace upon those in his pastoral charge, thereby evincing conversions, more fervent resolution for life, priestly vocations and special consecration.

It is certain that only the priest who has daily experience of the *conversatio in cælis* and whose life is motivated by friendship with Christ will succeed in making genuine advances towards authentic and renewed evangelization. ✧

### CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY.

*The Priest and the Third  
Christian Millennium: Teacher of  
the Word, Minister of the  
Sacraments and Leader  
of the Community*, c.III, n.2

dom of Calvary, out of His love of the Father and for humanity.

To obtain this grace, priests should fix their eyes on the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose singular, supreme, and effective participation in the priesthood of Christ has been extolled by the Pontifical Magisterium. As Pius XII teaches, it was

She, "the second Eve, who, free from all sin, original or personal, and always more intimately united with her Son, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father for all the children of Adam, sin-stained by his unhappy fall, and her mother's rights and her mother's love were included in the holocaust."<sup>7</sup>

Ordained ministers ought therefore to unite their hearts to Mary Most Holy, so that, thanks to her infallible intercession, they may be one priest and one victim with Jesus, and finally be able to exclaim with St. Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). ✧

<sup>1</sup> ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Dominicæ Cenæ*, n.2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, n.38.

<sup>2</sup> PIUS XI. *Ad catholici sacerdotii*, n.35.

<sup>4</sup> ST. PIUS X. *Hærent animo*, n.21.

<sup>5</sup> LEO XIV. *Letter to the Presbytery of the Archdiocese of Madrid*, 28/1/2026.

<sup>6</sup> ST. PIUS X, *op. cit.*, n.4.

<sup>7</sup> PIUS XII. *Mystici Corporis Christi*, n.110.

## “*Digitus Dei hic est*”

**O**n April 11, thirty-one acolytes of the Clerical Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right Virgo Flos Carmeli were ordained deacons by the Most Rev. Fernando José Monteiro Guimarães, CSSR, Archbishop Emeritus of the Military Ordinariate of Brazil, during a solemn Eucharist celebrated at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, in Caieiras (Brazil).

In his homily, Archbishop Guimarães recalled: “More than twenty years ago, on June 15, 2005, in the Basilica of Our Lady of Carmel, in São Paulo, the first Heralds of the Gospel priests were ordained, among them the late founder, Monsignor João Clá, of venerable memory. [...] It was the beginning of an uninterrupted series of diaconal and priestly ordinations over the years, with which Divine Providence

enriched the family of the Heralds of the Gospel, enabling a fervent and authentic new evangelization, not only in Brazil, but also in many countries throughout the world.”

Highlighting the providential nature of the ordination of these new ministers, he added: “Fidelity to what the Church proposes as the ideal for priestly formation, extreme care with the intellectual and theological formation of its seminarians, the solid spiritual life and intense apostolic zeal of the subsequent deacons and priests was, during the following years, the commitment of the Virgo Flos Carmeli Clerical Society, effectively offering to the Church successive groups of deacons and priests according to the Heart of Christ. *Digitus Dei hic est*” – the finger of God is here.



Sergio Céspedes



Stephen Nami

**Supplication for the candidates** – After the homily, the ordinands made their public commitment to assume celibacy and promised obedience to the Diocesan Bishop and to their religious superior. Then, as they prostrated themselves, the entire assembly sang the Litany of All Saints, supplicating help for them from Heaven.



Leandro Souza



Stephen Nami



Sergio Céspedes

**“Send forth upon them the Holy Spirit”** – Through the imposition of hands and the prayer of ordination, Archbishop Guimarães conferred the first degree of the Sacrament of Order upon the thirty-one men elected to the diaconate. In this prayer, the ordaining minister asks the Divine Paraclete to strengthen them with the seven gifts of His grace.



Photos: Stephen Nami

**Vestiture, and presentation of the Book of the Holy Gospels –** The new deacons were then clothed by their priest brothers with the stole over the right shoulder and the dalmatic, garb that represents the character of sacred ministers. Now in diaconal vestments, each one received the Book of the Holy Gospels from the hands of the ordaining Archbishop, a symbol of their duty to be courageous heralds of God’s Word.



Leandro Souza

Photos: Stephen Nami

**Admitted to the order of the clergy to serve –** The ordination rite ended with the sign of peace, given to the new deacons by the ordaining Archbishop and other deacons present at the ceremony. The Holy Mass continued with great solemnity, with the newly ordained proceeding directly to the service of the altar.

Stephen Nami





David Ayusso

## Configured to Christ

**T**he Holy Church rejoiced, on April 12th, with the ordination of twenty-six priests of the Clerical Society of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right Virgo Flos Carmeli, in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, in Caieiras (Brazil).

The solemn Eucharist, concelebrated by ninety-two priests, was presided over by Cardinal Raymundo Damasceno Assis, Archbishop Emeritus of Aparecida, and was attended by several ecclesiastical and civil authorities, including: Dr. Tarcísio Gomes de Freitas, governor of the State of São Paulo; Dr. Ricardo Luís Reis Nunes, mayor of the city of São Paulo; Dr. Tirso de Sales Meirelles, president of the

federal entities FAESP/SENAR; Deputy André do Prado, president of the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo; Deputies of said Legislative Assembly: Antonio Assunção de Olim; Deputy Gil Diniz; Deputy Lucas Bove; Deputy Thiago Auricchio; Dr. José Renato Nalini – representing the president of the São Paulo Court of Justice, Judge Francisco Eduardo Loureiro –, in addition to several other tribunal judges from the same court; Judge Paulo Adib Casseb, from the Court of Military Justice of the State of São Paulo; Dr. Ângela Gandra, municipal secretary of International Relations of São Paulo, representing Dr. Ives Gandra Martins.

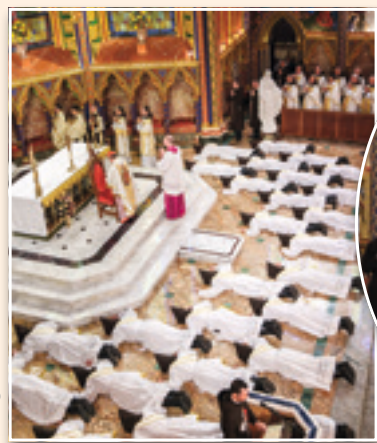


Photos: Leandro Souza

**Homily** – Addressing the ordinands, Cardinal Damasceno highlighted: “Today, you will not simply receive a role in the Church, long and patiently awaited, but, by being configured to Christ the Priest, you will be inserted into the very mission of Christ. [...] The priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus.”



Magazine archive



Leandro Souza

**Priests of Christ forever** – Prostrate, the candidates implored heavenly aid during the Litany of All Saints. They then received the second degree of the Sacrament of Orders through both the imposition of hands by the Cardinal Archbishop – an act repeated by the priests present – and the ordination prayer.

Magazine archive



Photos: Leandro Souza

**Ordained for the Holy Sacrifice** – The new priests were clothed with priestly vestments – the stole draped from the neck and the chasuble. They then presented their hands to be anointed with the sacred chrism. Finally, they received the paten holding bread and the chalice containing wine for the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

David Ayusso



Leandro Souza

**“Alter Christus”** – Configured with Christ, the new priests will be able not only to administer the Sacraments, but also, following the example of the Divine Shepherd, to lead the sheep to a deep union with God. At the end, they received the congratulations of the authorities present.

# Priestly Ministry at the



Photos: Renan Rodrigues

1



2



3

Instagram.com/santaclarara

**In the heart of Structural City** – Activities are intense at Jesus the Good Shepherd Parish, located in one of the neediest areas of Brazil's Federal District. In addition to the celebrations and social programs offered at the parish headquarters, Fr. Lourenço Ferronato, EP, also dedicates himself to visiting the sick (photo 1), blessing homes (photo 2) and to the spiritual assistance of the Santa Clara Christian Association – of which he is president – dedicated to supporting children and families in vulnerable situations (photo 3).



Yuner Macuácuá

1



Ademir da Luz

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Ademir da Luz

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Yuner Macuácuá



Ademir da Luz

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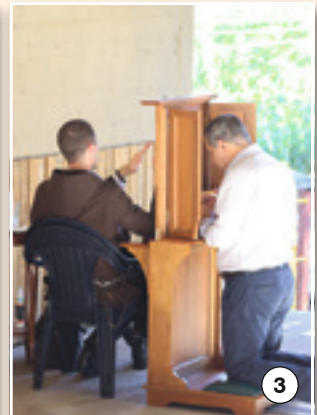
Lucilia Maria Matos

**Consolation and hope for those who suffer** – Special attention is given by Herald priests to those who are most united to Jesus through their suffering. In the above photos, Anointing of the Sick and distribution of Communion to the sick in Matola, Mozambique (photos 1 and 4); administration of the same Sacrament in a hospital in São Paulo (photo 5); blessing the sick in Tutupali, Ecuador (photo 3), and in Brazil: at a hospital in Cotia (photo 6); assistance to the elderly at the Angel's Nursing Home in São Paulo (photo 2); and funeral rites at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Chapel, in Mairiporã (photo 7).



# Service of the Church

Photos: Karolinne Kaufmann



Maria José Feliz

Karolinne Kaufmann



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**Administration of the Sacraments** – Ease of access to the Sacraments is something that distinguishes Our Lady of Grace Parish entrusted to the Heralds of the Gospel, making its various communities a reference point in the Serra da Cantareira region. Above, First Communion for adults (photo 1) and children (photo 2) at the mother Parish, St. Jude Thaddeus; celebration of Matrimony at the same church (photo 4); Confessions at St. Agnes Chapel (photo 3); and Baptism at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary (photo 5) and Holy Family Chapel (photo 6).

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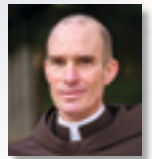


Paulo

**Close to the faithful** – As a caring Mother, the Holy Church is close to all the faithful through her ministers. Above, blessing of a home in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza (photo 1), and in Mairiporã, Brazil: greeting parishioners after Holy Mass at the chapels of St. Agnes Chapel (photo 2) and Our Lady of Lourdes (photo 3).

## Holding Fast to Mary

How much gratitude the priest should show to the Blessed Virgin Mary, from whom he receives everything! How can he repay the one who considers priests her predilect sons, seeing in them the image of her Divine Son?



✠ Fr. Santiago Ignacio Morazzani, EP

“**M**ay priests rejoice in the Blessed Virgin!”<sup>1</sup> exclaimed St. Ephrem, the Cantor of Mary.

For the priest truly devoted to her, Our Lady is the inexhaustible source of all joys. And the preeminent occasion in which he can commune with his Mother is the Holy Mass, the high point of the day and of a priest’s life. *Commune*, that is the appropriate term, because it is above all in the Eucharist that he will find her, and it is during the celebration that he will manifest his filial love to her, entrusting his intentions to her and opening to her the secrets of his heart.

### Mary, at the foot of the altar

Can the celebrant be fully certain that the Blessed Virgin is spiritually at his side? Without the slightest doubt. For, having remained at the Cross until the end of the agony of her Divine Son, She likewise accompanies the renewal of His sacrifice in every Eucharist, and will do so until the end of time, as numerous authors demonstrate, among whom we highlight Pope John Paul II: “Mary is present in the memorial – the liturgical action – because She was present at the salvific event. [...] She is in the memorial of the Passion-

Resurrection, at every altar where it is celebrated, because, adhering with her whole being to the Father’s design, She was present at the salvific event of Christ’s death.”<sup>2</sup>

Our Mother and Lady, called “Queen of the Clergy,”<sup>3</sup> is the first assistant at all Masses, and the more the priest turns to her, the more will he benefit from her presence. Firstly, because “we owe the Eucharist to the Blessed Virgin, and because, in instituting it, Our Lord thought first of her,”<sup>4</sup> as a certain disciple of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort wrote. And it is no coincidence that She is remembered and honoured *in primis* in Eucharistic Prayer I, the Roman Canon: “in communion with those whose memory we venerate, especially the glorious ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

### A priestly Heart

Furthermore, as St. John Eudes teaches, there is an admirable similarity between the altar of the celebration and the Heart of Mary: “It was on this altar that She offered to the Divine Majesty the same sacrifice that her Son Jesus offered Him on Calvary. This adorable Saviour sacrificed Himself only once to His Father, on the altar of the Cross; but His Holy Mother immolated Him

ten thousand times on the altar of her Heart, and this same Heart was as it were the priest who immolated Him, and was also immolated with Him.”<sup>5</sup>

Another point of union between the Blessed Virgin and the priest is that, although She did not receive the ministerial priesthood, her dignity “as Mother of God is incomparably superior to that of the priest”<sup>6</sup> and, associated by her Divine Son with the work of Redemption, She “was a super-priest, by virtue of having intrinsically cooperated with Christ Himself in the redemptive sacrifice of humanity,”<sup>7</sup> as the eminent Dominican theologian Fr. Antonio Royo Marín explains.

### Refuge in our weakness

Considering his own smallness and unworthiness in the face of the adorable mystery of which he is minister and mediator, the priest raises his gaze to the Mother of Mercy and finds refuge in her, as a well-known Mariologist beautifully wrote: “When he considers that he holds in his hands this Christ, in whose name he speaks and acts; when he finds himself, a simple creature, before this God whose place he has assumed for a few moments; [...] he will seek his model in superior heights. As a creature overflowing with gratitude at seeing himself so close to



the God of love, disconcerted by this intimate participation in a mystery that surpasses him, he will turn to the humble Mother of the Incarnate Word. In the obscurity of faith, he will look to the Star of the Sea.”<sup>8</sup>

And the priest will be fully aware that, although it is through his words that transubstantiation takes place, it is from Mary that he receives the inef-fable gift of Eucharistic Communion, just as it was through her that human-ity received Jesus Christ.

Following the terms of the aforemen-tioned Montfortian writer, he will ap-ply to the Mother of God the words from the Book of Proverbs (cf. Pr 9:5), sung in the Eucharistic responsory *Homo quidam* attributed to the King of France Robert II, the Pious (972-1031): “*Venite, comedite panem meum, et bibite vinum quod miscui vobis* – Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine that I have prepared for you.” Thus, “the Virgin in-vides us and has the right to in- vite us, for this bread is *her* bread: ‘*panem meum,*’ which She prepared for us through the Incarnation. This bread is Jesus, who, both on the altar and on the Cross, is her Son. And this wine that She prepared for us is the pure wine of Di- vinity, too strong for our weakness. Mary tempered it by humanity.”<sup>9</sup>

### How can we thank Mary?

How much gratitude the priest should devote to the Blessed Virgin Mary, from whom he receives every-thing! How can he repay her who con-

siders priests her predilect sons, seeing in them the image of her Divine Son? One could say that such retribution is not only difficult to conceive, but ab- solutely impossible, due to the incal- culable distance between any human creature – including those elevated to the honour of the priesthood – and the sublime dignity of the Mother of God.

However, let us remember that, for a true mother, the sincere love of a child

has, of itself, the power to open the doors of the Immaculate Heart, and there de- posit the offering of ardent gratitude.

And there is more: since the priest has the power to apply, according to his intentions, the merits of Our Lord in each Mass celebrated, he can of- fer them to the maternal hands of the Blessed Virgin. This is what a fervent Mariologist calls “enriching Mary,” following the example of St. John the Evangelist, explaining that in this way we render to her a thanksgiving wor- thy of her greatness, for it is to honour her with homage of infinite value:

“The beloved disciple made his Mother partake in all his goods, which means that he offered her the Eucharist and the sacrifice. Certain-ly, we can no longer bene- fit Mary with the sacramen- tal presence of Jesus, since She already enjoys the glori- ous face of her Son in Heav- en, but we can deposit in her hands the fruits of the sacrifi- cial offering that we celebrate at the altar, and thus enrich her with ever-increasing means of serving on earth the sacred interests of her God.”<sup>10</sup>

Sons filled with love for our Im- maculate Mother, priests consecrated to Mary for all eternity, we implore her:

Never leave our altar, O Lady. Ac- company us from now until the last Mass of our lives, inspire our inten- tions, purify our hearts. We desire not only celebrate in thy presence, but, enraptured with love, from the begin- ning to the end of the Eucharist we also wish to be embraced by Thee. ✠



Leandro Souza

### How to make retribution to her who cherishes priests as her predilect sons?

Mass in *Lumen Prophetæ* House, Franco da Rocha (Brazil); on the previous page, “*Virgin and Child*” - Christian Museum, Esztergom (Hungary)

is invaluable, and She receives it in the joy of her soul, even though such a child may be burdened with guilt and misery. Therefore, the filial affection of the priest

<sup>1</sup> ST. EPHREM. *Hymni de Beata Maria*, I. In: *Hymni et sermones*. Mechliniæ: H. Des-sain, 1886, t.II, p.522.

<sup>2</sup> ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Angelus*, 12/2/1984.

<sup>3</sup> Expression used by M. Olier, founder of the Company of the Fathers of Saint Sulpice

(cf. BERGHE, Oswald van der. *Marie et le sacerdoce*. 2.ed. Paris: Louis Vivès, 1875, p.105).

<sup>4</sup> LHOUMEAU, Antonin. *La vie spirituelle à l'école du Bienheureux L.-M. Grignon de Montfort*. 4.ed Tours: Alfred Mame et Fils, 1920, p.460.

<sup>5</sup> ST. JOHN EUDES. *Le Cœur admirable de la très Sacrée Mère de Dieu*. In: *Œuvres complètes*. Vannes: Lafolye Frères, 1908, v.VI, p.322.

<sup>6</sup> ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *La Virgen María*. 2.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1997, p.111.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.173.

<sup>8</sup> LAURENTIN, René. *Marie et la Messe*. Essai sur un problème de spiritualité sacerdotale. In: *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*. Bruxelles. Year LXXI. No.1 (1949), p.53.

<sup>9</sup> LHOUMEAU, op. cit. p.464.

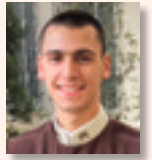
<sup>10</sup> BERGHE, op. cit., p.299.



## Another Elijah

More than two and a half millennia later, how does the story of St. Elisha speak to us? In every way. To us, he is an elder brother who went before us on the path of devotion to Mary.

✠ **Ângelo Francisco Neto Martins**



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St. Elisha - King's College Chapel, London

**S**t. Elisha, who is he? The father and master of the prophets of Mount Carmel. The preacher who multiplied the loaves. The man whom bears obeyed, and who ruled over the kings of his time. The seer for whom the future held no mystery. The most miraculous of the prophets. The general who defeated armies single-handedly. He who, while alive, raised a boy from the dead and, after his death, restored life to an adult. The Saint with whom the Most High spoke to the sound of the harp.

Is this Elisha? No.

These are the deeds of Elisha. His true story is not found in what he did, but in what he was. And he was far greater than the aforementioned feats. He became another Elijah.

### *A new father*

Let us return to the year 860 BC.<sup>1</sup> A young man, with his twelve yoke of oxen, is ploughing the land of Abel-Mehola in Israel: Elisha, a man of moderate means, settled in life. He is perhaps twenty years old and has charted a course for himself in accordance with the law – a peaceful path, without major upheavals and, therefore, without great glory.

But suddenly everything changes! Elisha notices the man of God approaching: Elijah, the prophet who, only some two months earlier, had stood alone against the king and queen, as well as the eight hundred and fifty priests of

Baal and Asherah. He had defeated them in the name of the Lord, bringing fire down from Heaven to earth.

When he is close, without saying a word, he throws his cloak over Elisha. Elisha realizes that the prophet has just symbolically taken him under his charge and, immediately leaving his oxen, runs after Elijah (cf. 1 Kgs 19:20). But the longing for an easy life might have betrayed Elisha. Not, however, a life that has been relinquished as a burnt offering. He takes a yoke of oxen and sacrifices them. With the wood from the ploughs, he cooks the meat and serves it to his people (cf. 1 Kgs 19:21). Neither animal nor plough remains. He thus renounced *his material possessions*.

And while those people feasted, he took his leave of them forever for the sake of a mission greater than himself. In doing so, he renounced his *affective and family ties*. These are the first two indispensable steps of self-sacrifice required to become a perfect disciple: then “he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered to him” (1 Kgs 19:21).

For about six years, Elisha closely accompanied his new spiritual father on his perilous adventures: it was during this time that Elijah confronted King Ahab (cf. 1 Kgs 21), denounced the idolatry of King Ahaziah (cf. 2 Kgs 1:1-4) and destroyed, with fire from Heaven, two groups of soldiers who had come

to arrest him (cf. 2 Kgs 1:9-17). Elisha was there, absorbing and admiring every gesture of his master.

### *Deaf to the world*

But the time had come for Elijah to depart, and for the disciple's ultimate test: would he be willing to follow his master, despite the clash between the latter's judgements and those of society at large?

The test began with the most arduous part. Elijah forbade him from doing what he was made to do, that is, to follow the prophet: "Tarry here, I pray you; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." "But Elisha said, 'As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you'" (2 Kgs 2:2). And so he prevailed, for he was able to hear in his father's words, not what they said, but what Elijah truly desired. He understood the master's fiery heart well.

Then came the second stage. "And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the Lord will take away your master from over you?'" (2 Kgs 2:3). He now had to face his own milieu... Elisha had renounced the bonds of blood. He lived in complete opposition to the world. At that moment, however, he had to ignore the dictums of his brothers of vocation, those who lived with him. He had to renounce *his* world. And he does so: "Yes, I know it; hold your peace" (2 Kgs 2:3), he replied.

And he continued to accompany Elijah. As master and disciple walked away talking together, the fifty sons of the prophets shook their heads, as if to say: "That radical Elisha... when will he learn to use his common sense?"

### *A double share of his spirit*

Meanwhile, Elijah turned to Elisha: "Ask what I shall do for you, before I

am taken from you?" (2 Kgs 2:9). The reply was explosive and direct, bursting forth like a geyser from a soul wholly consumed by admiration: "I pray you, let me inherit," cried Elisha, "a double share of your spirit" (2 Kgs 2:9).

It was the cry of final victory over pride! Elisha had torn down, one by one, all the towers of self-love as he meticulously renounced everything. At last, emptied of himself, he became a chosen vessel prepared to receive the precious and ever-new wines of prophecy.

Thus, the moment the fiery horses swept Elijah away in a whirlwind, the

mantle of the master, doubled over, descended upon Elisha, and with it, a double share of Elijah's spirit. And the disciple bade him farewell with cries invoking protection: "My father, my father! the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" (2 Kgs 2:12).

Retracing his steps, Elisha reached the banks of the Jordan, parted the waters and crosses the river on dry ground. The sons of the prophets, beholding this scene, could not help but observe: "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha" (2 Kgs 2:15). And they prostrated themselves before Elijah in Elisha.

From this point on, the profuse and astonishing miracles of the perfect disciple will begin. To start, he will purify the previously foul waters of a city (cf. 2 Kgs 2:19-22) and, shortly afterwards, command two bears to punish forty-two youths who were mocking the prophet (cf. 2 Kgs 2:23-25). For a widow, he will multiply the precious oil; he will obtain from God a son for a barren woman, and when the child dies, will restore him to life and to his mother's arms (cf. 2 Kgs 4:1-37). Such an appreciation for motherhood will make

him a "father" and "mother" to the sons of the prophets, whom he will heal of a collective case of food poisoning and, on another occasion, feed a hundred men with twenty loaves which, multiplied beyond measure, will still leave some to spare (cf. 2 Kgs 4:38-44).

We could list many other marvellous deeds of Elisha that fill several chapters of the Second Book of Kings. Let us, however, consider just two of the most significant aspects of the prophet's life: his lordship and his slavery.

### *The armies of Elisha*

In Elisha's time, there was not a single secret plan against Israel, devised by the king of Aram in the region of



St. Elijah is carried away in a fiery chariot before Elisha - Mount Carmel Convent, Haifa (Israel)

*"A double share of your spirit": this was the cry of final victory of a man who, emptied of self, was ready to be invested with prophecy*



Syria, that did not fail. The only explanation, the Aramean reasoned, was that someone in his entourage was on the Israelites' side. He summoned the men of the council and threatened: "Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, 'None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber'" (2 Kgs 6:11-12). An extreme measure was taken: an entire army mobilized to defeat the prophet of the Almighty.

When Elisha's servant saw the troops arriving to arrest his master, he despaired. But the man of God reassured him: "Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2 Kgs 6:16). And, praying to God Omnipotent, he implored that the servant's eyes might be opened. Then the servant beheld the reality: "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kgs 6:17). The same fiery cavalry that had carried Elijah now formed Elisha's honour guard. The holy one of Yahweh had at his command the countless legions of the Seraphim.

As this new horizon opened up before the servant, Elisha cast the vi-

sion of their pursuers into darkness. In the blink of an eye, the Aramean army became a farcical band of the blind leading the blind. The son of Elijah went down to them and took command of those who had come to arrest him. He now had at his disposal

*The astonishing miracles of the perfect disciple began. In all of them, two significant aspects can be discerned: lordship and slavery*

not only the soldiers of Heaven, but also those of a foreign land. And, just as he had just defeated them through the darkness and convinced them of this truth, he now restored their sight and persuaded them to return to their homeland: "And the Syrians came no more on raids into the land of Israel" (2 Kgs 6:23).

Where did such sovereignty come from? What raised him above emperors? Slavery.

### *A slave of love*

Elijah had departed, but his perfect disciple did not cease to serve him. "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2 Kgs 3:11) – a typical role for a servant in those days – continued to show his servitude even in the master's physical absence, with all the signs characteristic of that state.

He scorned honours and fame as though they were mud. When Naaman, the famous general of Aram, sought out the prophet to ask for a cure for leprosy, Elisha did not even go out to receive him. He did not need to be courted to cleanse the visitor's decaying skin.

Just as he shunned prestige, so too did he shun treasures. Naaman, healed through Elisha's intercession, offered him gold and garments: "so accept now a present from your servant," he pleaded. "As the Lord lives, whom I serve," replied Elisha, "I will receive none" (2 Kgs 5:15-16).

Why did he not want the slightest trace of reward? Because *he served*.

In private, he was no less austere. This was attested by a couple from Shunem who used to welcome him into their home. Husband and wife decided to build a room for their guest with everything he needed: "a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp" (2 Kgs 4:10). Such was the luxury of the man who managed Israel's affairs, commanded enemy troops and was obeyed by Cherubim. Where were the carpets? Where were the paintings? Where the beautiful gold artefacts? He had sacrificed all of that along with the oxen of Abel-Mehola.

Such was the servant of Elijah.

### *Death and recompense*

The decades passed in a flurry of activity in Elisha's life, until around 790 BC. By this time, his final illness had overtaken him. Kneeling by the bed



"The prophet Elisha curses the boys who mocked him", by Willem Willemsz van den Bundel - Gemäldegalerie, Berlin

Reproduction

where he was preparing for his final journey stood the king of Israel, Joash, afflicted and distraught.

Elisha, who “in all his days [...] did not tremble before any ruler” (Sir 48:12), then hears from the monarch’s lips the praise he did not expect, the supreme words of commendation, the very same he had addressed to Elijah upon seeing him amidst fiery whirlwinds: “My father, my father!” King Joash exclaims in tears, “The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” (2 Kgs 13:14).

Everything had been said. Elijah and Elisha, united in earthly life, inseparable despite death, would meet on the other side bearing the same title, the same halo, the same spirit.

“It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher” (Mt 10:25). For Elisha, it was more than enough...

Eighty years after his birth and six decades after meeting Elijah, Elisha could peacefully close his eyes to the world, for “Nothing was too hard for him, and when he was dead his body prophesied. As in his life he did wonders, so in death

*He taught that whoever surrenders himself to Our Lady must give all, renouncing his goods and his world, if not in reality, at least inwardly*

his deeds were marvellous” (Sir 48:13-14). Even a corpse, thrown upon “the bones of Elisha, [...] revived, and stood on his feet” (2 Kgs 13:21).

### Other Elishas

More than two and a half millennia after those events, in what ways does the story of St. Elisha speak to us?



“Elisha refuses the presents of Naaman”, by Pieter de Grebber - Private collection

Reproduction

In every way. He is for us an example, an ideal, an elder brother who has gone before us on the way, who has already trodden to perfection the roads we now travel.

Elisha was another Elijah. We must be so many other Elishas. For, just as “Elisha was faithful to Elijah, so must we be faithful to Our Lady.”<sup>2</sup> Elijah, the first devotee of the Virgin, foreshadowed her in some way. In this way, Elisha too heralded the future slaves of love to Mary.

He taught that whoever surrenders himself to the Mother of God must give all and give himself entirely, renouncing his possessions and his world, if not in reality, then at least in his heart. He proclaimed that only one who follows her despite the contrary opinions of others, who accompanies her even amid spiritual aridity and the apparent contradictions of the spiritual life, will be a servant of Mary.

But he also demonstrated for posterity that those who detach themselves from all things will have the heavenly host at their command and – O immense, inconceivable treasure – will receive the spirit of their Lady in double measure: “Perhaps sooner than we expect,” prophesied, in this regard, St. Louis Grignion de Montfort, “God

will raise up great men filled with the Holy Spirit and imbued with the spirit of Mary [...]. These holy men will accomplish this by means of the devotion [of the slavery of love to the Blessed Virgin] of which I only trace the main outlines and which suffers from my incompetence.”<sup>3</sup>

Let us imitate St. Elisha. And if we are to Mary what he was to Elijah, he will become a foreshadowing of us: “May we have her spirit as Elisha had that of Elijah, and all will be accomplished.”<sup>4</sup> ❖

<sup>1</sup> The historical information presented in this article has been drawn not only from the Holy Scriptures but also from the following works: SPADAFORA, Francesco. Eliseo. In: SPADAFORA, Francesco (Dir.). *Diccionario Bíblico*. Barcelona: Editorial Litúrgica Española, 1959, p.184; MARCONCINI, B. Eliseo. In: LEONARDI, C.; RICCARDI, A.; ZARRI, G. (Dir.). *Diccionario de los Santos*. Madrid: San Pablo, 2000, v.I, p.678-680.

<sup>2</sup> CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Homily*. São Paulo, 17/6/2006.

<sup>3</sup> ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *Le Secret de Marie*, n.59. In: *Œuvres Complètes*. Paris: Du Seuil, 1966, p.468.

<sup>4</sup> CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 26/2/1966.



## “I congratulate you for this son of yours”

While recovering in Paris after a surgery, a commonplace episode gave Dona Lucilia the opportunity to see just how true it is that God honours parents in their children (cf. Ecclus 3:3).

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

**I**t was in the French capital, where history still radiated from every corner, that Dona Lucilia would finally fully recover her health.<sup>1</sup>

Paris was not wholly new to Dona Lucilia, for since her youth she had been acquainted with it by assiduously reading French authors, and particularly the *Journal de l'Université des Annales*.<sup>2</sup> She had also learned much from relatives and close friends who frequently spent time in Paris.

### *The charms of the City of Light*

Thus, as she beheld many of its structures for the first time, it was like a reunion with old friends, as she called to mind the ideal image she had formed of them from descriptions she had heard or read.

Over the years, her enchantment for this magnificent city's historical traditions would steadily grow. The tint of the stained-glass windows of *Notre-Dame*, the moonlight casting its glow on white stone monuments, the waters of the Seine flowing beneath beautiful stone bridges seeming to surge with memories – it was all marvellous.

She likewise admired the splendour of the refined society of the twilight years of the *Belle Époque*, during which it reached its highest peak.

Moreover, innocent as a lamb and as delicate as an ermine, she loved to

savour the graceful sonority of the French language, which she spoke with perfection.

Dona Lucilia would remain for some time in this Paris, dear to her on so many accounts. One of the reasons for this – perhaps the primary motive – being her children's formation.

One of the roads branching from the famous *Place de l'Etoile*, home of the *Arc de Triomphe*, is *Avenue de Friedland*, on which stands the Royal Hotel. It was in this splendid establishment, whose proprietor was the noble Monsieur de Dedrines, that Dona Lucilia and the family took up accommodations in 1912.

In her advanced old age, at almost 92, Dona Lucilia still retained lively memories of several little episodes that marked her stay in that *doux pays*.<sup>3</sup>

### *The puppet theatre of Rond Point*

She narrates:

*I was at the hotel, in Paris... You see, I couldn't get about easily, since I was still suffering from the effects of the surgery I had undergone in Germany. So, I didn't go out every day and would leave the children with the governess, who took them to Rond Point.*<sup>4</sup>

*One day, after their walk, the Fraül-ein<sup>5</sup> told me that Plinio was causing a sensation among the puppet theatre audience. He was arguing with the*

*puppets, lashing out against a “crocodile”... I became a little concerned. What could be happening?*

*The next day I woke up feeling a little better disposed, so I decided to accompany the children myself, without disclosing my motive even to the governess, since I didn't want to make her uneasy.*

*We arrived and bought our tickets. It was an open-air theatre, with a cordoned-off seating area. All the children were smartly dressed and accompanied by family members or governesses.*

*Until the performance began, my two little ones were well-behaved, seated among the spectators. But you have no idea what happened when the play began! Plinio became indignant with a “crocodile” that wanted to devour a “priest.” He stood up and began to dispute with it.*

It was a play featuring a crocodile puppet having an argument with another puppet representing a priest. The former claimed that he had every right to devour the latter, offering unjust and anticlerical arguments, while the “priest” would counter-argue, trying to defend himself.

*The puppeteer – Dona Lucilia continued – seeing that Plinio's involvement captured the viewers' interest, used it to his advantage. He made the crocodile raise its voice and, turning*

to Plinio, begin to argue directly with him.

Becoming more incensed, Plinio climbed up on his chair, and from there brandished his finger and shook it like this (she wagged her finger to demonstrate). He told the “crocodile” that it was lying.

With an enchanting voice, she imitated him:

“Ce n’est pas vrai! Ce n’est pas vrai!”

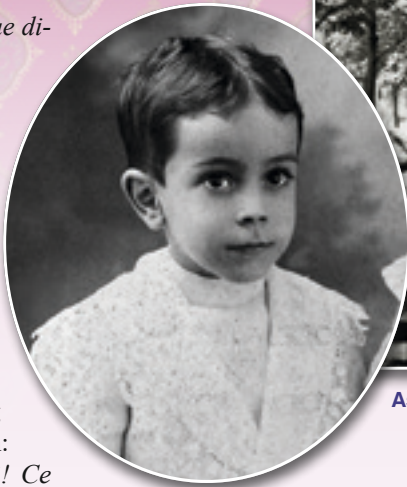
The show, as Dona Lucilia described it, went on a while longer, with Plinio keeping up his part until the end. The skit now included not only puppets but also a lively and intelligent little Brazilian boy who knew how to express himself very well in French.

Dona Lucilia went on to tell another charming vignette which occurred right after the puppet show.

### The “theft” of the cake

On the way back to the Royal Hotel – she explained – I decided to take the children to a confectionery called Marquise de Sévigné. Rosée and Plinio were fascinated with the tastefully-arranged window displays, replete with sweets, chocolates, and colourful bonbons, in attractive packages.

Rosée picked a sweet and Plinio chose a coffee-flavoured cake. The salesclerk wrapped them and handed them to the children. Plinio took his and headed toward the door. I called him back and said:



Photos: Reproduction

**Astonished, Dona Lucilia watched the scene unfold: little Plinio, at only four years of age, gallantly defended the priest being threatened...**

Puppet theatre in Paris; inset, Plinio at age four

“My son, are you only going to take yours? It is not becoming for a gentleman to leave something for a lady to carry. You must carry your sister’s as well.”

Without putting up resistance, he took the two packages and went down the street carrying one in each hand.

He cheerfully took the lead, and was walking ahead of Rosée and me, when a man with a top hat, goatee, a fine moustache – evidently a gentleman – overtook us. He winked at me as he passed by as if requesting my leave to play a friendly prank.

As he walked past Plinio – Dona Lucilia continued – he plucked the two packages from his hands and said:

“Why thank you, thank you so much! You are most kind; I am much obliged for the gift you have given.” And he walked off.

Plinio ran after the man, grabbed him by the legs to stop him, and declared:

“What you’re doing is not right.”  
“How so? You gave me these sweets.”

“No, you are committing two sins. First you are stealing, since I didn’t give you the sweets; and second, you are lying, saying that I gave them to you when I did no such thing. Give them back, please, because they are not yours.”

After a brief parley with Plinio, the man returned the packages. Turning to me, he doffed his hat and paid me his compliments:

“Madame, your son is enchanting. Every morning I take a break from work to stop by Rond Point to watch his debates at the puppet theatre. I congratulate you for this son of yours.” ❖

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

Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2013, p.142-145

<sup>1</sup> Stricken by a serious illness, Dona Lucilia travelled to Germany in 1912 to undergo gallbladder surgery. The operation, which at the time involved considerable risk, was successfully performed by Dr. August Karl Bier, a renowned

surgeon and the Kaiser’s personal physician.

<sup>2</sup> A French magazine with a section that transcribed lectures by renowned historians and writers. The lectures were illustrated with actors in cos-

tumes from the period referred to.

<sup>3</sup> French for “sweet country”. An affectionate expression used by the French to designate their homeland.

<sup>4</sup> A circular garden park crossed by several avenues, the most

important among them being Champs-Élysées.

<sup>5</sup> German for “Miss.” In Brazil at that time, the word was synonymous for a children’s governess, when she was of German origin.

# Sister Poverty and Lady Grandeur

In their zeal for the splendour of the Liturgy, the saints reveal to us the supernatural balance between poverty and magnanimity.



✠ Dcn. Gabriel Borges, EP

**B**y declaring himself united in a symbolic marriage with Sister Poverty, St. Francis of Assisi left us a precious lesson. Since the sharing of goods is inherent to marriage, we can imagine what “benefit” the holy mendicant must have derived from this mystical betrothal...

Sister Poverty, obviously poor by nature, and embodying virtues such as humility and meekness, is, nevertheless, rich in heavenly goods. Theologically, through poverty we detach ourselves from earthly goods out of love for the heavenly pledge, as Christ prescribed: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven” (Mt 19:21). Although this is a universal counsel, religious are to practise poverty with

greater perfection through the profession of a vow.

Poverty is also a beatitude (cf. Mt 5:3), but not fulfilled in the same way by everyone. It is often fitting for bishops, for example, to wear solemn vestments that manifest the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, so that they themselves may be reminded that they are Successors of the Apostles and may inspire the faithful to practise the virtue of honour, called *dulia* by St. Thomas Aquinas. It is not their role to embrace a superficial poverty, but rather, by virtue of their office, to practise it in conjunction with the virtue of magnanimity, which also involves the possession of certain external goods.

Magnanimity, “which is also called greatness of soul or nobility of character, is a noble and generous disposition

to undertake great things for God and for one’s neighbour”; it presupposes a “noble soul, [...] a lofty ideal, generous ideas; a courageous soul that knows how to bring its life into harmony with its convictions.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, among those who were at once magnanimous and detached we find St. Francis of Assisi, who “proclaimed to the friars the incomparable nobility, the hidden glory and the sublimity of imitating the humble and poor life of Christ”;<sup>2</sup> the Franciscan tertiary, St. Louis IX, King of France, in building the dazzling Sainte-Chapelle; the mendicant St. Thomas Aquinas in erecting the exuberant monument of the *Summa Theologiae*; the servant of the servants of God, the Supreme Pontiff, who from his See makes the authority of Christ shine forth as His Vicar.

“St. Francis is espoused to Lady Poverty”  
by Giotto di Bondone - Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi (Italy)





Dedication of the high altar of the Abbatial Church of Cluny by Pope Urban II - National Library of France, Paris

The finest examples of harmony between poverty and grandeur are found precisely in the lives of the saints. In them, magnanimous zeal for the Liturgy and for the instruction of the flock meant that they were not stingy in the use of earthly goods for the greater splendour of God's service.

St. Clement Maria Hofbauer, renowned for his popular missions, remarked on the role of art in collaboration with the preacher, noting that "people listen more with their eyes than with their ears; they are captivated by what they see."<sup>3</sup> At the Redemptorist church in Warsaw, at the missionary's instigation, an orchestra was not lacking; he was accompanied by dozens of violinists. He mentioned in a letter that he had acquired a valuable musical instrument in Vienna for use in the same church. And to justify himself to certain irritated detractors, who held high office, he explained that: "It was not a matter of pleasing the ear, but of praising God. The more festive a religious service was, the more a person would

experience God; through the harmony of music, heart and mind are lifted up to God and filled with devotion."<sup>4</sup>

In the presbytery he lit as many candles as possible, and the altar boys were dressed superbly. The vestments were the finest, and the place contained a Bible of great value. Given the impressive results in terms of conversions and the administration of the Sacraments, it is perplexing to learn of the violent persecution unleashed against the holy Redemptorist, accused of "terrible" crimes...

A prototype of poverty, St. Francis, who even confessed to one of his spiritual sons – who was concerned about making savings for the future – that he would rather have the altar of the Blessed Virgin stripped if necessity required it, than break his vow of poverty for even a moment, was also very zealous in helping impoverished priests, especially with regard to the decent adornment of altars.<sup>5</sup>

St. Odilon, abbot of Cluny and great almoner, stated that "the gold of the

Church is not meant to be accumulated, but to be distributed," and one of his biographers recounts that he "gave up for the benefit of the poor beautiful vessels and jewels from his church, including the crown of Emperor Henry I, deeming it shameful to refuse these objects to Christ's poor, since His Blood was shed for them."<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the same Saint – like the other Cluniac abbots – raised the splendour of the temples and the Liturgy to a surprising degree: valuable vestments, murals, gilded chandeliers, decorated books, candles in abundance, and every kind of ornamentation.

In short, Sister Poverty, when espoused by a just soul, does not generate meanness or pusillanimity, but rather the flourishing of the virtue of greatness, magnanimity. Thus, the evangelical self-denial, lived in fullness by so many saints, is not an end in itself, but a means of emptying oneself for a greater manifestation of God's glory: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). ✠

<sup>1</sup> TANQUEREY, Adolphe-Alfred. *Précis de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique*. 6.ed. Paris: Saint Jean l'Évangéliste, 1924, p.680.

<sup>2</sup> CLARENO, Angelo. *Historia septem tribulationum Ordinis Minorum*, L.I.

<sup>3</sup> HEIZMANN, CSsR, Josef. *Vida de São Clemente Hof-*

*bauer*. Aparecida: Santuário, 1988, p.72.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ST. BONAVENTURE. *Legenda de São Francisco*

*de Assis*, c.I, n.6; c.VII, n.4; c.VIII, n.5.

<sup>6</sup> CHAGNY, André. *Cluny et son empire*. Lyon-Paris: Emmanuël Vitte, 1938, p.218.



## *I Am All Yours, You Are All Mine*

*P*our into the bosom and heart of Mary all your precious possessions, all your graces and virtues. She is a spiritual vessel, a vessel of honour, a singular vessel of devotion.

*Ever since God personally hid Himself with all His perfections in this vessel, it has become completely spiritual, and the spiritual abode of all spiritual souls. It has become honourable and has been the throne of honour for the greatest saints in Heaven. It has become outstanding in devotion and the home of those renowned for gentleness, grace and virtue. Moreover, it has become as rich as a house of gold, as strong as a tower of David and as pure as a tower of ivory.*

*Blessed is the man who has given everything to Mary, who at all times and in all things trusts in her, and loses himself in her. He belongs to Mary and Mary belongs to him.*

*St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort*

Our Lady of Perpetual Help -  
Tabor Formation House,  
Caieiras (Brazil)