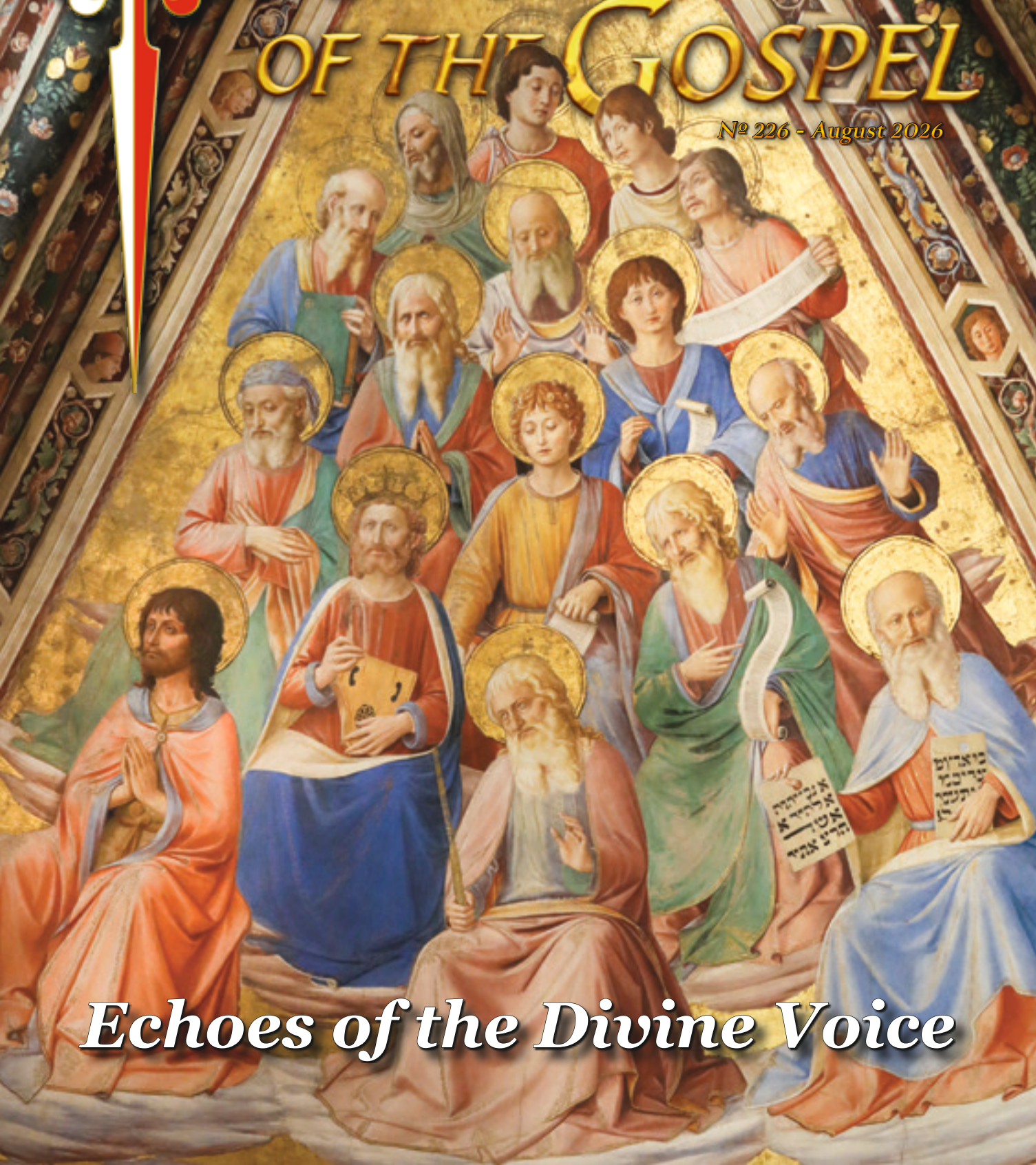




HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Nº 226 - August 2026



Echoes of the Divine Voice



Reproduction

Children, Servants and Slaves of Mary

Some religious asked Fr. Maximilian for a weekly spiritual programme to help them live as slaves of the Immaculate Virgin. He replied kindly, always reiterating the same truth:

“Every programme certainly has its limits; but the programme you are asking me for should not have any.

“Let us strive to be children, servants and slaves – and wholly, wholly, wholly – of Mary. In a word: hers in every respect, and ever more hers. How can we achieve this?

“Let us remember that the essence of total surrender and consecration is not a feeling or a memory, but rather the will. Therefore, if someone does not feel the sweetness of being with her – it seems to me that this does not usually happen – and does

not even remember her or think of her, yet does not revoke their personal gift but renews it, let them rest assured, for She reigns in their heart. We can easily control our will; that is why we must ensure that it conforms to her will and always fulfils it in the most perfect way.

“That is all...

“To realize how much we depend on her, like a child, we must throw ourselves at her feet, just as children do at their own mother’s.

“May the spirit of the Immaculate One grow ever deeper.”

RICCIARDI, OFM Conv, Antonio,

Un hombre fuera de serie.

2.ed. Madrid: Testimonio, 2008, p.178

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CONTENTS

➤ OUR READERS ASK.....	4
➤ EDITORIAL	
The Face of God.....	5
➤ THE VOICE OF THE POPES	
Ever-New Light.....	6
➤ THE SUNDAY LITURGY	
He Will Never Dismiss Us.....	8
Jesus Also Casts Us into the Storm!.....	9
Showing Prejudice... But Towards Whom?.....	10
"Tu es Petrus".....	11
The Secret of Love and the Seed of Eternity.....	12
➤ THE POWER OF EXAMPLE	
In Body, Freed by Miracle; in Soul, Freed by Slavery.....	13
➤ TREASURES OF MSGR. JOÃO	
A Tribune of Prophetism.....	14
➤ THEME OF THE MONTH – THE GIFT OF PROPHETISM	
The Perpetual Echo of God's Voice.....	18
➤ HISTORY – LIFE'S TEACHER	
The Eliatic Line – Mary Immortalized in History.....	22
➤ ST. THOMAS EXPLAINS	
Beware of False Prophets!.....	24
➤ BIBLICAL TEACHINGS	
The prophet Isaiah – The Messianic Prophet.....	26
➤ WHAT DOES THE CATECHISM SAY?	
Lay Participation in Christ's Prophetic Office.....	29
➤ SPLENDOURS OF CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION	
Heraldry – The Frog, the Lion and the Cross.....	30
➤ DONA LUCILIA	
Storytime with Dona Lucilia.....	32
➤ LIVES OF THE SAINTS	
St. Augustine of Hippo – Great in Thought, Great in Holiness.....	34
➤ CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY	
How to Profit from Your Faults – Man's War, God's rest.....	38
The Apparitions in Cimbres – A Maternal Warning.....	42
➤ DID YOU KNOW.....	45
➤ HERALDS WORLDWIDE.....	46
➤ TENDENCIES AND MENTALITIES	
True Heroes.....	50



Francisco Lecaros

8 Christian civilization glimpsed in the desert of Bethsaida



Reproduction

22 A prophetic and Marian chain spanning the centuries



João Paulo Rodrigues

24 How to discern a false prophet?



Reproduction

38 Is there any way that we can profit from our falls?

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



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

If public Revelation came to an end with the death of the last Apostle, and everything we need for salvation is found in the Bible and Tradition, what is the point of Marian apparitions? Can they bring anything new?

Alejandro Ramírez – Barcelona (Spain)

Those who love are not content merely to provide what is necessary, what is indispensable; they give in superabundance, even to the point of excess. A father or mother who loves their child does not merely provide them with the food essential for survival, but, as far as they are able, also provides refreshing drinks, tasty sweets – in short, enjoyable food. It is not enough for the child merely to survive; rather, it is fitting that they should live happily, surrounded by their parents' affection, which will be evident in every detail of their existence, including delightful and wholesome food. Why? Simply out of love.

Now, as the Apostle John stated so beautifully, “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16). And although He has granted us everything we need through the Incarnation of the Word and His Revelation – of which the Magisterium of the Church is the faithful interpreter – He, the “First and the Last” (Rev 1:17), has chosen to accompany us throughout history with certain manifestations of love, in a very special way through the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Are they strictly necessary? No, but... what a loss it would be to our Faith not to have them!

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that “even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit” (CCC 66). And the Church will always draw from her treasure – the deposit of Faith (cf. 1 Tim 6:20) – “what is new and what is old” (Mt 13:52). The Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, for example, was already implicitly present in the deposit of Faith, and there were Catholics who did not accept it until the dogma was proclaimed. However, after December 8, 1854, when Pope Pius IX dogmatically proclaimed the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, everyone must give their full

adherence to this truth, which was brought to its fullness only in the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, the Holy Church teaches that “Throughout the ages, there have been so-called ‘private’ revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of the Faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully of it in a certain period of history. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or His saints to the Church” (CCC 67).

Mariophanies – manifestations of Our Lady – do not, of course, constitute a “new revelation” that would supplant the Revelation of Christ, but rather a renewed way in which the Holy Spirit leads the faithful of all ages to the fullness of truth, “To bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation” (Second Vatican Council, *Dei verbum*, n. 5).

Thus, Marian apparitions throughout history have served to guide the faithful in the struggles they face, offer consolation in life’s hardships, and provide direction for the children of light in every age. To mention only the most recent examples, how much have we learned from Our Lady’s apparitions to St. Catherine Labouré at Rue de Bac, to St. Bernadette in Lourdes and to the little shepherds in Fatima!

Could these apparitions be superfluous? We might well respond with the French saying: “The superfluous: a very necessary thing!...” ✠



THE FACE OF GOD

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, one of the terms for *prophet* – *hozeh* – indicates *one who sees*; the Greek *prophetes* means *the one who speaks*. But what, in fact, do the prophets see and say? Moses is the best example to answer this question, for “there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Dt 34:10). Although the holy liberator of the Israelites was incapable of intuiting the divine essence – otherwise, he would have died (cf. Ex 33:20) –, “the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex 33:11).

Even without contemplating God as He is – except “His back” (cf. Ex 33:23) –, Moses was profoundly known by the Creator. Even being “slow of speech” (Ex 4:10), he was invested to guide the people, for the Lord spoke through him. Here, one perceives a mysterious connaturality between the One who is (cf. Ex 3:14) and the prophet; an intimacy that the Most High promises to His chosen one: “My presence will go with you” (Ex 33:14).

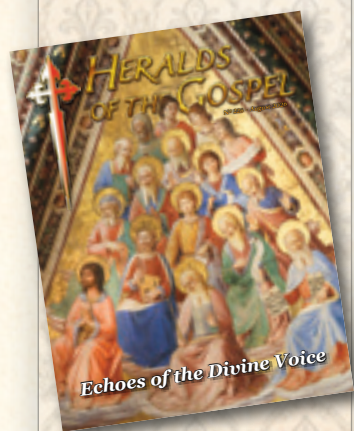
In this deep bond, the prophet becomes a herald of the divine voice and a reflection of the “unapproachable Light” (1 Tim 6:16); in short, the very face of God on earth. Elijah arose “like a fire,” and “his word burned like a torch” because it was “by the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, and also three times brought down fire” (Sir 48:1, 3). In an analogous manner, when the Lord commanded Hosea to sound the trumpet (cf. Hos 8:1), He concretized, through the prophet, the urgent warning to the people.

It is no coincidence that the crowds recognized Jesus, the Incarnate Word, not only as a prophet (cf. Mt 21:46), but as the “great prophet” (Lk 7:16). Others identified Him with John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the ancient prophets (cf. Mt 16:14). However, when the Apostles were questioned about His identity, Peter, inspired, declared: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16).

In the testimony of the first Pope there was something prophetic, for Our Lord affirms that his profession of faith did not come from flesh and blood, but from the very “Father who is in Heaven” (Mt 16:17). With the constitution of the Church, prophecy then enters into the New Covenant, “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1:17).

From then on, every baptized person participates in the prophetic mission of Christ (cf. CCC 1268). The Acts of the Apostles attest to a profusion of prophetic actions, from the four daughters of Philip, “who prophesied” (Acts 21:9), to the disciples, who acted “through the Spirit” (Acts 21:4) and in full harmony with Him: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15:28).

Prophetic manifestations did not, however, end in the apostolic era; they remain perpetually alive in the Church, especially in Marian apparitions. In these, the Queen of Prophets not only *sees* and *is seen* by her children, and *speaks* with them, but also *acts* alongside her Divine Son in the course of history, cooperating in their salvation. Thus we see the face of God continuing to accompany humanity... ✠



The prophets -
Orvieto Cathedral
(Italy)

Photo: Francisco Lecaros



Ever-New Light

It is not uncommon that, at the most critical moments,
just as a gust of wind parts the clouds to reveal the star that will
guide the sailor to port, the Lord sends that supernatural inspiration
which can make one soul the salvation of his people.

A MISSION WITH A HISTORICAL SCOPE

The Church is present in the world as a sign of unity for the entire human family. She recognizes today's questions and challenges as the current setting in which to carry out her particular vocation of listening, dialogue and service, and of being responsive to everything concerning the lives of contemporary men and women.

This involvement in people's lives helps the Church understand ever more clearly that her mission has a historical scope and entails a responsibility for the way in which social relations are built. For this reason, she cannot consider herself a stranger to the forces shaping society. On the contrary, the Church actively participates in the processes by which society grows and is organized, and she offers her own contribution.

LEO XIV.
Magnifica humanitas, 15/5/2026

THE AUTHENTIC REFORMERS

Let us look at the history of Christianity, to see how history develops and how it can be renewed. It shows that saints, guided by God's light, are the authentic reformers of the life of the Church and of society. As teachers with their words and witnesses with their example, they can encourage a stable and profound ecclesial renewal because they themselves are profoundly renewed, they are in touch with the real newness: God's presence in the world.

This comforting reality namely, that in every generation saints are born and bring the creativity of renewal constantly accompanies the Church's history in the midst of the sorrows and negative aspects she encounters on her path. Indeed, century after century, we also see the birth of forces of reform and renewal, because God's newness is inexhaustible and provides ever new strength to forge ahead.

BENEDICT XVI.
General Audience, 13/1/2010

THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES THE CHURCH BY MEANS OF HIS CHOSEN ONES

Throughout history the Lord has continued to reveal Himself to the little and the humble, enabling His chosen ones, through the Spirit who "searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10), to speak of the gifts "bestowed on us by God... in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language" (1 Cor 2:12,13).

In this way the Holy Spirit guides the Church into the whole truth, endowing her with various gifts, adorning her with his fruits, rejuvenating her with the power of the Gospel and enabling her to discern the signs of the times in order to respond ever more fully to the will of God.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Divini amoris scientia, 19/10/1997

THE EXAMPLE OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US

It is not uncommon that, at the most critical moments, just as a gust of wind parts the clouds and reveals the star that will guide the sailor to harbour, the Lord sends the supernatural inspiration which can make one soul the salvation of his people.

Lift up your eyes, then, beloved children, [...] and consider the great examples that have gone before you.

PIUS XII.
Radio Message, 25/6/1956

TWO FOUNDERS WHO WERE ABLE TO READ THE "SIGNS OF THE TIMES"

This also happened in the 13th century with the birth and the extraordinary development of the Mendicant Orders: an important model of renewal in a new historical epoch. [...]

The best known and most important of the Mendicant Orders that came into being in this period are the Friars Minor and the Friars Preachers, known as Franciscans and Dominicans. Thus they are called by the names of their Founders, respectively Francis of Assisi and Dominic de Guzmán.

These two great saints were able to read "the signs of the times" intelligently, perceiving the challenges that the Church of their time would be obliged to face.

BENEDICT XVI.
General Audience, 13/1/2010

TIMELY HELP IN THE VICISSITUDES OF EVERY AGE

The all merciful God who has never failed His Church in its struggles with this world and who wisely provides timely help when various vicissitudes arise – although in the sixteenth century because of His displeasure He punished Christian people and permitted many provinces of Europe to be overcome by the darkness of heresies raging far and wide – unwilling to reject His own people He prudently raised up new and holy luminaries by whose excellence distinguished sons of the church were strengthened in the truth, and the heretics themselves were gently restored to a love of the truth.

Among these distinguished men Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, exemplar of renowned holiness and teacher of true and pious doctrine stood out. Both through his words and his writings, which will endure for all time, he struck down the sinister errors rising up at the time; he defended the faith; he put vice to flight; he improved standards of moral behaviour, and he showed all that Heaven was accessible.

PIUS IX.

Dives in misericordia, 16/11/1877

MODEL OF STRENGTH AMID TRIALS

Chosen by God, an unshakeable awareness of her mission and an ardent desire for holiness, fuelled by the will to better fulfil her most exalted calling, led her [St. Joan of Arc] to overcome obstacles, disregard dangers, confront



God has never forsaken His Church, which is engaged in its earthly battle, but, in accordance with the various vicissitudes of circumstances and the times, wisely provides it with the appropriate assistance

Pope Innocent III dreams of St. Francis of Assisi supporting the Church, by Giotto di Bondone – Basilica dedicated to the “Poverello” in Assisi (Italy)

the powerful of the world, involve herself in the international problems of her time, and transform herself into a captain clad in iron, ready to launch a fearsome assault. [...]

In a long or short life, in triumph or apparent catastrophe, with the ruggedness of stone or the fragility of a poor mortal maiden: it matters little! If there is an immutable truth, a Faith that cannot pass away, the love of an immortal homeland, the yearning for a peace that is a natural demand of the human heart; it is the thirst for a justice that will inevitably prevail at the hour appointed by history, at the hour of reconstruction, rehabilitation and resurrection.

This is a necessary law, which always unites sacrifice with triumph, humiliation with glory, the mystery of Calvary with the luminous dawn of the Resurrection.

Blessed are the people who remember this, so that they may face, if need

be, the judgement of men, as Joan knew how to do with admirable steadfastness and unshakable serenity; so that they may not refuse sacrifice – which she faced with fear of no one and with marvellous energy– so that they may always remain faithful to their vocation, especially in the most difficult moments.

Joan of Arc thus presents herself to the Christians of our time as a model of solid, active faith, of docility to a most exalted mission, and of strength in the midst of trials.

PIUS XII.

Radio Message,
25/6/1956

TEACHER FOR OUR TIME

Shining brightly among the little ones to whom the secrets of the Kingdom were revealed in a most special way is Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face [...].

In fact, whatever changes can be noted in the course of history and despite the repercussions they usually have on the life and thought of individuals in every age, we must never lose sight of the continuity which links the Doctors of the Church to each other: in every historical context they remain witnesses to the unchanging Gospel and, with the light and strength that come from the Holy Spirit, they become its messengers, returning to proclaim it in its purity to their contemporaries.

Therese is a Teacher for our time, which thirsts for living and essential words, for heroic and credible acts of witness.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.

Divini amoris scientia, 19/10/1997



August 2 – 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

(Is 55:1-3; Ps 144; Rom 8:35, 37-39; Mt 14:13-21)

He Will Never Dismiss Us



✠ Fr. Santiago Ignacio Morazzani Arráiz, EP

In this Gospel, the most impressive aspect is evidently the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. Other wonders, however, can also be contemplated in the words and gestures of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Wishing to offer rest to the disciples, Our Lord sails across the Sea of Galilee, heading with them to a deserted place near the city of Bethsaida Julias. But the crowd does not allow them to rest: departing from Capernaum and neighbouring towns, they travel a distance of approximately ten kilometres in a short time and arrive before them. When Jesus disembarks, He is surrounded.¹

What does He do? “His heart was moved with pity for them,” and “He cured their sick” (Mt 14:14). If we remember that there were “about five thousand men, not counting women and children” (Mt 14:21), we can imagine the excitement that was overflowing at those moments: the sick carried by family members, loud supplications, shouts of joy after the healings, emotion, tears, arms raised to Heaven...

However, evening was falling. Amidst the intense activity, the Apostles must have reached the point of exhaustion, and perhaps that is why they said to Jesus: “This is a deserted place” – did they think He had not noticed? – “and it is already late” – did they imagine He had lost track of time? – “dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves” (Mt 14:15).

What must they have thought of the reply? Let us not forget that this was the *first* multiplication of the loaves. No one could have imagined the solution that the Master would provide for the situation: “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves” (Mt 14:16). What a beautiful, noble, and loving attitude! Let us meditate on these words of the Saviour.

Since time immemorial, a certain social custom has been maintained, which governs the conduct of people when making or receiving a visit: hosts never encourage visitors to leave, as it is the guest who takes the initiative to depart. Manners and politeness? Yes, but above all, the practice of charity. The owner of the residence finds himself in a situation that reminds us of God, to whom all flock to be benefited, as the Psalm of this Sunday affirms: “The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all His works. [...] The eyes of all look hopefully to You, and You give them their food in due season” (Ps 144:9, 15).

When did this custom originate? It will probably never be known, but we can conjecture that it was there, in the desert of Bethsaida: the Divine Host did not wish to dismiss the visitors, but kept them close to Himself, preparing for them a new manifestation of His tenderness.

Christ Himself gave one of the first examples of Christian civilization.

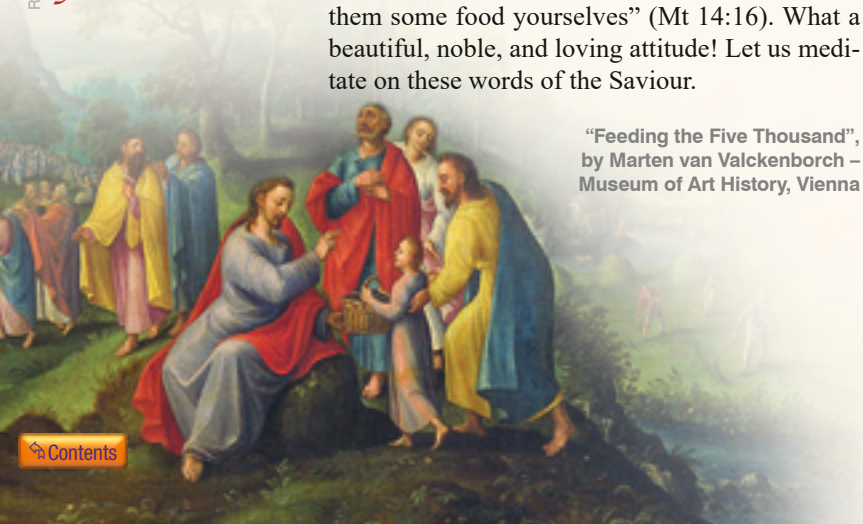
From this passage of the Gospel we can, then, retain:

– A conviction: Our Lord will never dismiss us nor reject our requests. The Sacred Heart throbs with compassion for us and will give us abundant help, in the manner of the multiplied bread, of which “twelve wicker baskets full” remained (Mt 14:20).

– A resolution: let us seek Jesus with all confidence! He awaits our visit, not only in sacramental Communion, but also in the monstrance or tabernacle, from where He will flood us with the outpouring of His mercy. He awaits us in the confessional, to “heal those who are sick,” cleansing our souls of all the misery of sin.

With Him is the Blessed Virgin Mary, our heavenly hostess, through whose maternal hands the inexhaustible stream of grace and forgiveness will always flow out us. ✠

“Feeding the Five Thousand”,
by Marten van Valckenborch –
Museum of Art History, Vienna



¹ Cf. TUYA, OP, Manuel de. *Biblia comentada. Evangelios*. Madrid: BAC, 1964, v.V, p.337-338.

Jesus Also Casts Us into the Storm!

✠ Fr. Rodrigo Fugiyama Nunes, EP



The idea that God saves us in the storms of life is very beautiful, quite common, and entirely real. But it is much less common to consider divine goodness taking us out of the calm and casting us into the midst of storms, with the risk of sinking...

Right after multiplying the loaves for a huge crowd, “Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and precede Him to the other side” (Mt 14:22). As God, He had arranged, from all eternity, what would happen: “Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it” (Mt 14:24).

The storms on the Sea of Galilee are very strong because, with those waters more than two hundred metres below sea level, they are exposed to the harsh winds coming from the Mediterranean, causing waves more than two metres high. Despite being manned by experienced fishermen, the Apostles’ boat was very vulnerable – like all boats of the time – and their anguish must have been immense.

And Our Lord? To intervene, He waits for the “fourth watch of the night” (Mt 14:25), a period between three and six o’clock in the morning, leaving the disciples in tribulation for a long time.

The scene is intensely dramatic and sublime: obeying the Master, they encounter a terrible storm; they wait almost all night without any relief; until, instead of calming the storm, Jesus goes to the disciples “walking on the sea” (Mt 14:25). They do not recognize Him, they think it is a ghost and

begin to cry out in fear. Everything goes from bad to worse...

Finally, the Good Shepherd reveals Himself: “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” (Mt 14:27). Called by the Lord, Peter walks on the water, but... when he feels the wind, fear takes hold and he begins to sink. He is held by the hand, rebuked for his lack of faith and, finally, accompanies Our Lord to the boat. Only then, upon entering, does the wind subside. And “those who were in the boat did Him homage, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God!’” (Mt 14:33).

One of the lessons that can be drawn from this Gospel is that every disciple of Our Lord – that is, every baptized person – will one day find themselves in the midst of a great storm, through no fault of their own, but through obedience to the voice of Jesus!

In this scenario, we are unaware of what is happening, everything seems to worsen, Heaven appears closed, and we feel that we are going to sink. This is, literally, the dark night...

Why does God allow this? To make us grow in love, trust, and faith. In love, because our pride is completely broken. In trust, because in the storm we can be certain of divine protection and, even if we are sinking like Peter, we will be held by the hand; we just have to wait! In faith, because we know that, despite appearances to the contrary, everything is guided by Providence.

But today we can do something that the Apostles were not given to do then: entrust the vessel of our lives to the Blessed Virgin. Guided by her, we will arrive unharmed at the port of Heaven! ✠



Jesus walks on the water – Private collection

Out of obedience to the Master's voice, the disciples encounter a terrible storm. Everything goes from bad to worse... Why does God allow this to happen?

Showing Prejudice... But Towards Whom?

✠ Fr. Michel Six, EP



There is something enigmatic in this Sunday's Gospel. A Canaanite woman – therefore not Jewish, a pagan – cries out after Jesus, imploring the liberation of her daughter, tormented by a demon. Our Lord, however, does not answer... She becomes so insistent in her plea that the disciples themselves intercede with the Master. And He seems to refuse to perform the miracle: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24).

Far from becoming discouraged, the pagan woman redoubles her boldness by prostrating at the divine feet of the Saviour, who again puts her to the test: "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs" (Mt 15:26).

Suspense... Will Jesus, for the first time, deny the appeal of an anguished soul? Will He act with prejudice, discriminating against a pagan woman? No, because the woman, prostrate, humbles herself and begs for only a crumb... Compassionate, because of the mother's great faith, Our Lord frees her daughter.

In the Canaanite woman's actions, it can be noted that the Master leads her on a journey from paganism to the manifestation of faith, passing from darkness to light.

After recognizing Jesus' messiahship – "Lord, Son of David" (Mt 15:22) – she asks for compassion. Even after a certain initial distancing, she prostrates herself before Him, assuming an attitude of humility, of recognition of the Redeemer's superiority, of adoration... It was not enough to have Him as Messiah, it was necessary to recognize Him as God. Indeed, she had already abandoned paganism, for she prostrated herself before the true God.

Our Lord, however, makes His mission clear: He calls first the children of Israel – even though they have gone astray. It is then that she begs for the crumb, as if to say: "Accept me, Lord, among those who have You as their master, even if it be only like one of the little dogs. I want to belong to You, and receive whatever You give me."

In view of this: a miracle! Healing and liberation for the daughter, and at the same time, confirmation of a faith so new, yet so deep! Now,

in this scenario, did Jesus show prejudice? The prophet Isaiah clarifies, in the first reading, that the house of God "shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Is 56:7). All? Yes, provided that whoever goes up to the house of God respects justice and practises righteousness.

Anyone who desires the miracles of the Divine Thaumaturge – regardless of their situation – should proceed like the Canaanite woman: leave the darkness and seek the Light; prostrate

themselves before the Saviour, but also respect the law and live according to the justice that He Himself taught us. On the part of the Redeemer, there will never be partiality. However, those who do not want to abandon the darkness or paganism with its works distances themselves from the Master, and it is they who show prejudice – towards the Person of Jesus, the true God.

Let us imagine the fate of the Canaanite woman if she had not sought the Lord... What would her situation be? She would have remained in the darkness of paganism, and her daughter would still be tormented by the devil. Let us do as she did, without fear of "prejudice": let us seek Him! ✠



"Christ and the Canaanite Woman", by Ludovico Carracci – Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan (Italy)

Will Jesus, for the first time, deny the plea of an anguished soul? Will He act with favouritism by discriminating against a pagan woman?

“Tu es Petrus”



✠ Fr. Antonio Jakov Ilija, EP

Moses, the incomparable prophet, tireless shepherd of Israel, infallible transmitter of divine Revelation and architect of the divinely instituted Hebrew liturgy, did not, however, possess the singular power entrusted to the Prince of the Apostles. Nor did the Synagogue receive the promise of immortality granted to the Catholic Church.

The pontificate, conferred upon Peter, is endowed with such authority and so many gifts that perhaps they have not yet been fully manifested in all their ministerial power, even surpassing the miracles performed by Moses. While Moses obtained from God, through prayer, what he needed, Peter acts as one who, so to speak, “imposes” his decisions on the Almighty, backed by the power of the keys granted to him.

This is an exclusive privilege and an immense responsibility for the Pope, a guarantee of the permanence of the Church and the validity of the Sacraments for the salvation of souls. Indeed, St. Augustine¹ emphasizes that the Prince of the Apostles was the only one worthy to hear the Redeemer’s words: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church.”

It is surprising that the power of the keys was given by God to Peter for the good of the Church, and not granted by the Church to Peter and his legitimate successors, as Cornelius a Lapide² aptly comments. Undoubtedly, the Holy Catholic Church needed and continues to need this promise of immortality, as evidenced by its bi-millennial and often turbulent history, marked by a succession of 266 Popes, including 83 Popes who were saints—31 of them martyrs—but also, in contrast, another 35 antipopes.³

On one occasion, Dr. Plinio imagined the simple beginning of a new day for the great Pontiff St. Pius X as follows: “All of Rome sleeps. [...] The Pope gets ready and goes to the chapel, where he will prepare for the august sacrifice of the Mass. As he walks towards the Lord, the concerns of the previous evening are reborn in his soul [...]. Before entering the oratory, he stops and looks through one of the large windows of the Vatican. Ahead, the first glimmers of sunlight kiss the imposing dome of St.

Peter’s Basilica. In the empty square stands the famous obelisk that always reminds us of the Carthusian motto: ‘The cross stands, while the world turns.’ From the two large fountains flanking the obelisk rises the harmonious sound of water surging up and cascading into the basins. The daylight begins to reflect more intensely on the dome.

And the Pontiff muses: ‘The Holy Roman and Apostolic Catholic Church! The Papacy!’ And his Guardian Angel whispers in his soul: ‘*Tu es Petrus!*’”⁴

Throughout twenty centuries, since the day Our Lord conferred the Papacy on the humble fisherman of Galilee, countless suns have risen over successive Pontiffs who govern the Church, witnessing the fall of countless empires and kings who swore to destroy it. The gates

of hell will not prevail against the Church, because they will not prevail against Peter. ✠

The papacy, conferred upon Peter, is endowed with such authority and so many gifts that perhaps they have not yet been fully manifested in all their ministerial power



St. Peter, by Nardo di Cione – Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven (Connecticut)

¹ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *Sermo CCXCV*, n.2.

² Cf. CORNELIUS A LAPIDE. *Commentaria in Matthæum*, c.XVI, n.19. In: *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram*. Parisiis: Lucovicus Vivès, 1857, v.XV, p.370.

³ There are slight discrepancies in the numbers, depending on the sources.

⁴ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Esplendor áureo [Golden Splendour]*. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Year VIII. No. 91 (Oct., 2005), p.42.

The Secret of Love and the Seed of Eternity



✠ Fr. José Roberto Polimeni, EP

The Divine Master questioned the Apostles about His identity, to which Peter promptly replied: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16). Jesus then blessed him: “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven” (Mt 16:17).

Next, Our Lord reveals, for the first time, His Passion, Death, and Resurrection. The Gospel continues: “Then Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, ‘God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to You.’ He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an obstacle to Me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do’” (Mt 16:22-23).

A severe rebuke to the first Vicar of Christ... Why? Although Peter – not yet a saint – had recognized the Master’s divinity through divine inspiration, he spoke like a man bound to worldly concepts. He did not allow for suffering on the path of the expected Messiah, who would restore – in an earthly visualization – the prerogatives of Israel.



Jesus on His way to Calvary, by Hans Holbein the Younger – State Gallery, Stuttgart (Germany)

Jesus, however, reveals the supernatural side of His coming: the redemption of humanity and the opening of the gates of Heaven.

Thus, the Divine Redeemer teaches us something crucial: caution is needed with personal speculations or advice that lead us astray from our spiritual duties, even if they come from a friend, for he will be a bad advisor, that is, Satan!

Jesus then exhorts: “Whoever wishes to come after Me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mt 16:24). “Denying oneself” means saying “no” to everything that I want but that God does not want, and accepting with gratitude what Providence has in store for us.

Such a task proves arduous. And Our Lord also knows this... for He invites us to follow Him on the way to Calvary. How to bring this resolution to fruition? Two points are fundamental.

First, to bear in mind that “love is the capacity of one person to suffer for another, with joy,” as defined by Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. Without a deep love for the Saviour – which is proven in the fulfillment of the Commandments and the practice of the virtues – we will not have the necessary courage to suffer for Him.

Second, it is essential to keep our gaze fixed on the promise of eternity, where Our Lord “will repay all according to his conduct” (Mt 16:27). This is the key to accepting, with courage and faith, the trials He allows in our lives. Sufferings, when well accepted, purify us and prepare us for the enjoyment of endless happiness.

In the tribulations of the world, it is necessary to tread the *Via Crucis* already trodden by so many saints, now inhabitants of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us, therefore, beseech the Mother of Mercy for special graces to confide fully in her, who accompanied her Divine Son in the sorrows of the Passion and in the glory of the Resurrection. This is the secret to true love on this earth and the seed of eternal happiness. ✠

*Jesus invites
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How can we
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fundamental*

Francisco Lecaros

IN BODY, FREED BY MIRACLE; IN SOUL, FREED BY SLAVERY

France, late 10th century. In front of a church consecrated to the Mother of God, a boy waits alone for the return of his nurse and some of his father's servants, who are accompanying him. At a tender age, he suffered from an illness that had robbed him of the strength in his limbs, making any form of movement immensely difficult. There was no danger of him disappearing while his caretakers bought provisions for their journey at nearby shops.¹

However, perceiving his solitude and feeling impelled by a strong impulse of grace, the child decides to undertake an adventure. Overcoming the inertia of his body, he crawls into the sanctuary amidst the shadows. With great difficulty he reaches the presbytery and, grasping the altar cloth with a supreme effort, tries to stand up. The illness, however, continues to hold him back...

Suddenly, divine power, mediated by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, triumphs and restores the strength of those small limbs in a single instant. A miracle: the boy stands up! Free from the paralysis that bound him, he begins to run about, exultant at the unexpected supernatural intervention.

Meanwhile, the servants return to the place where the little paralytic had been left and, not finding him, begin to search for him everywhere, in anguish. Had he been kidnapped? Upon entering the church, they encounter an unusual scene: under the dim twi-

light filtering through the Romanesque stained-glass windows, the child scampers nimbly. Recognizing the prodigy of grace, they hasten to finish the journey and present that "walking miracle" named Odilo to his parents.

Years later, that same boy, whom time had matured and grace had transformed into a monk, the great abbot of Cluny – the largest monastic family of the time – would return to that church. This time, however, it would not be his arms and legs that would miraculously regain their vigour, but rather his soul that would soar to unimaginable heights of union with the Queen of Angels.

Before the altar where, once, the Mother of God had freed his limbs, he now came to subject them again, no longer to the crippling servitude of nature, but to the glorious and sacred slavery to Mary. There is no one around. Only the Angels contemplate the scene, enchanted. Encircling his neck with one end of a rope, the Saint places the other end on the Virgin's altar and, with Heaven as his only witness, pronounces his consecration:

"O most gracious Virgin and Mother of the Saviour of all ages, acc-

forward forever into your service. In all my difficulties, O most merciful Advocate, come to my aid. Below God, I place nothing before You. And, of my own free will, I surrender myself as a slave to your dominion for all eternity."

With this act of total surrender, St. Odilo, who had known Mary's love from an early age, crowned the miracle of his liberation. By becoming a slave to such a Lady, he attained the fullness of true freedom. His soul forever guarded from the power of the devil and his limbs definitively protected from servitude to sin,

in the Virgin's arms he would tread a straight and safe path to Heaven. The Saint thus revealed to humanity a secret hidden since creation: the supreme happiness of those who entrust themselves entirely to the Mother of God and Queen of the Universe. ✠

¹ Cf. JOTSAUD. *De vita et virtutibus Sancti Odilonis abbatis*. L.II, c.1: PL 142, 915-916.

With an act of slavery to Mary, St. Odilo crowned the miracle of his liberation

St. Odilo – Church of Our Lady, Cluny (France)



Magazine Archive



A Tribune of Prophetism

Dr. Plinio revealed to the general public what his discernment made clear to him, and he did not hesitate to make predictions that came true to the letter, tearing away the label of unrealizable that any analyst would have placed on them “a priori”.

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

Having concluded his mandate as congressman,¹ Dr. Plinio resolved to employ the ample influence he still enjoyed in the Catholic milieu, as well as other resources still at his disposal, to proceed vigorously with his apostolate.

One of these resources was the modest newspaper *Legionário*. Published semi-monthly since 1927 by St. Cecilia Parish for the circulation of the internal news of the community and the local Marian Congregation, it had enjoyed frequent contributions from Dr. Plinio since his entry into the Catholic Movement.

In 1933, some Congregation members had asked him to become the director of the paper, so that his prestige as congressman would favour it. He readily agreed. But since pressing duties in the Legislative Assembly kept him in Rio de Janeiro much of the time, assuming the effective directorship of the paper was absolutely unviable. So he said to them:

“You may put my name on it right away. When I am no longer congressman, I’ll start exercising the office. For the time being, it is impossible to do everything at the same time.”

Accordingly, on the expiry of his mandate, he assumed direction of the paper, convinced that this seemingly insignificant publication could, in fact, become excellent, as long as he formed “a good team of writers, and made effective use of the paper for the Catholic objectives that I had at heart.”²

But how would it be possible to transform a simple semi-monthly publication, restricted to the ambit of the religious life of a São Paulo parish, into a weekly of broad scope that was capable of wielding influence, as he wished, over Catholic public opinion across all of Brazil?

The idea was to offer potential readers a point of reference that was entirely unheard of until then both within the Catholic and the public press, by an analysis of all contexts and events, whether in the religious or the temporal sphere, entirely moulded by the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church.

First public tribune of his prophetism

As soon as Dr. Plinio assumed directorship, the *Legionário* began to cover the most varied topics: from national and international politics – without endorsing any of the ideologies in vogue – to advanced apologetics, aimed at equipping Catholics to boldly defend their Faith, turning to themes related to world history seen from a vantage point not found in contemporary manuals, and even economic, social or philosophical topics that were of interest to the faithful at large or affected the great conflicts the Church faced at that time.

Dr. Plinio determined that this vast subject matter should be “dealt with in a polemical style. Writing with the point of a sword and keeping up a continual debate on virtually every front.

[...] It was the Counter-Revolution’s bombardment of the Revolution.”³

Transformed rapidly into an influential weekly newspaper of international repercussion, *Legionário* became the podium from which Dr. Plinio revealed to the world the exceptional prophetic charism granted him by Providence.

He courageously exposed the nascent Nazi-fascist peril in Brazil, so that Catholics would not let themselves be deluded by false solutions; and later decried, as the first president of Catholic Action in São Paulo, the incipient errors to which no one had yet entirely opened their eyes, which threatened to change the immaculate face of the Holy Church.

Let us bear in mind that, contrary to what is typically believed, the essence of the prophetic mission consists not merely in making predictions, but primarily in pointing out to men the ways of Providence, and in contemplating the vision that God has of events.⁴ As we will see, this is the preeminent characteristic of Dr. Plinio’s prophetism, despite the fact that he also made predictions... and how many of them!

With the words of a true prophet who foresaw the forthcoming steps of the Revolution, Dr. Plinio unveiled to the general public that which his discernment made clear to him, and made bold prognostications that were often fulfilled to the letter, tearing away the label of “unrealizable” that any analyst would have imputed to them *a priori*. In this way, his opinion took on more



Photos: Reproduction

“Legionário” became the tribune from which Dr. Plinio revealed to the world the prophetic charism with which he had been gifted by Providence

Copies of “Legionário”; inset, Dr. Plinio giving a speech in the early 1940s

and more weight in the minds of both the good and the bad.

What nobody expected... happened

It would be impracticable to provide here an exhaustive list of so many previsions that were published and ultimately proven true. However, one of these prophecies, the successive developments of which created a momentous impact for having been considered altogether unlikely at the time, serves as a sample.

As many think even today, wide sectors of the public held the opinion that Nazism and Communism were antagonistic and irreconcilable ideologies. Impugning this opinion ever since the rise of German National Socialism and its counterparts in other nations starting from the 1930s, Dr. Plinio always pinpointed a mysterious unanimity of doctrines between the two systems, especially with regard to their unconfessed hatred of the Catholic Church, under the guise of apparently disparate aims.

This constant denunciation was especially eye-catching when, in the first edition of 1939, *Legionário* published the following lines:

“On the threshold of 1938, the major ideological positions into which humanity was distributed numbered four: Catholicism, Liberalism, Communism and Nazism. [...] While all the camps define themselves, an increasingly clear process is underway. It is that of the doctrinal fusion of Nazism with

Communism. In our view, 1939 will see the consummation of this fusion.”⁵

Anyone considering these words through the prism of natural knowledge alone would think that this time Dr. Plinio had gone too far, and risked falling into discredit. That he would underscore the philosophical affinities between the German and Russian dictatorships was admissible, but the mere hypothesis of an official alliance between national socialists and bolsheviks seemed pure insanity.

It was not by chance, as its author recalled decades later, that the article created a hullabaloo among readers of widely varied leanings. But... it was a prophet who spoke: the “rending of garments” was followed, a few months later, by generalized stupefaction, when the prognostication was fulfilled to the letter with the signing of the famous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact⁶ in August, which took all of the Western powers by surprise and left public opinion baffled on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War.

Dr. Plinio’s prophetic lucidity became even more evident from the benefits that both powers would garner with the curious treaty. It is needless to underline how much all of this greatly bolstered the prestige of *Legionário* and its director in the eyes of its readers.

Week by week, Dr. Plinio would microscopically analyse a wide assortment of news related to the world conflict, singling out nuances that no one

had noticed, and from there drawing the most audacious conclusions, whose accuracy would soon be proven true.

“Qui vivra verra”

A further example is afforded by another event closely related to the one just described. Dr. Plinio had been denouncing, long before the war broke out, various tactics in English politics which, in his view, aimed to favour the surrender of the British Empire in the face of the expansionist advances of the Third Reich.

He spared no invective against Lord Chamberlain’s nefarious pacifist diplomacy, which culminated in the shameful signing of the Munich Agreement.⁷

With this enormous moral defeat, which strengthened Nazism, several signs made it clear to Dr. Plinio that conspiracies were being hatched in England with a view to a collaborationist policy towards Germany, and that the success of these intrigues would leave all of Europe, and consequently the world, in the hands of Hitler’s neo-pagan ideology.

Amid this turbulent political-belligerent scenario in which the drama unfolding could change the destinies of humanity, in May 1941 the plane piloted by the second-ranking official of the National Socialist regime, Rudolf Hess,⁸ crashed on British soil – a sensational episode, whose deepest motives remain shrouded in mystery.

In his summary for *7 Dias em Revista* [The Week in Review] comment-



When it became clear that the conjectures put forward by Dr. Plinio in his articles were coming true to the letter, the impact on the public was immense

Members of “Legionário” visit Bishop José Gaspar at the Episcopal Palace

ing on the episode, Dr. Plinio did not hesitate to relate it to the pro-Nazi manoeuvres mentioned above:

“The matter is too confusing, or has become too confusing, for one to form a clear idea about it. [...] It seems indisputable that Mr. Hess did not ‘flee’ Germany [according to the hypothesis officially put forward by the Nazi regime] but rather undertook a journey for essentially political aims.”⁹ Masterfully, Dr. Plinio also ably alluded to how the events in question corroborated the suspicions that had been upheld over the previous months, based on the scant information gathered from news agencies, and planted a question in the readers’ minds.

It is worth emphasizing that it is only in recent decades that historians have come to regard, as the most plausible hypothesis, what Dr. Plinio had foreseen regarding an event that decisively altered the course of the Second World War. He would comment years later:

“Churchill said that never have so many owed so much to so few, referring to the airmen who defended London [from the Nazi air raids]. The fact of the matter is that the farmers who apprehended Rudolf Hess and took him to the tiny police station where he was detained could well feature on the list of the few to whom so many have owed so much.”¹⁰

However, even more surprising than all this was the consequence Dr. Plinio

associated with the capture of Hitler’s heir. Just as the world had come to regard the sinister Nazi-Communist alliance as the norm, the same article pointed to an unexpected twist on the horizon:

“As everyone can see, German-Russian collaboration is reaching its peak, with the active intervention of Russia on the side of Germany in Asian politics. *Legionário* has long foreseen everything that is unfolding. And just now, when this collaboration seems to have reached its zenith, permit us to suggest something further to our readers, something that will undoubtedly cause them surprise: given the footing of these relations, it is just as possible for them to be of long duration as it is for Germany to suddenly strike Russia. And this, without the Nazi-Communist symbiosis ceasing to be perfectly real. *Qui vivra verra* [Time will tell].”¹¹

Once again unthinkable in the eyes of any political or military commentator, Dr. Plinio’s words reverberated widely.

Barely a month later, at a moment when no one was envisioning a rupture of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Germany launched the invasion of Russia with Operation Barbarossa, introducing the world conflict into a new and excessively cruel phase.

Summoned to give an explanation

Such was the impact produced by the fulfillment of the prevision made in *Legionário*, that the then Archbishop of São Paulo, Dom José Gaspar

¹ Editor’s Note: Mandate served in the Constituent Legislative Assembly of 1933, with Dr. Plinio being the youngest and most voted deputy in all of Brazil.

² This text was taken, with minor adaptations, from: CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. A Prophet for Our Days*. São Paulo: Heralds of the Gospel 2017, p.124-128; *O dom de sabedoria na mente, vida e obra de Plinio Corrêa de*

Oliveira. Città del Vaticano-São Paulo: LEV; Lumen Sapientiae, 2016, v.III, p.45-53.

³ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conferência*. São Paulo, 23/6/1973.

⁴ Idem. *Conferência*. São Paulo, 18/2/1989.

⁵ “Prophetic revelation extends not only to future human events, but also to divine things. It encompasses not only those matters presented to all as matters of faith, but also higher mysteries, communi-

cated to the perfect and which are the object of wisdom” (ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.171, prol.).

⁶ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Entre o passado e o futuro* [Between the Past and the Future]. In: *Legionário*. São Paulo. Year XII. No. 329 (Jan. 1, 1939), p.2.

⁷ The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact became known by the names of its negotiators, the foreign ministers of Russia, Vyacheslav Molotov, and Ger-

many, Joachim von Ribbentrop. It consisted of a non-aggression treaty between the two countries, which pledged to maintain neutrality in the event of an attack by one of them on another nation, to intensify trade, and to supply war material to Russia. The treaty included a secret protocol dividing northern and eastern Europe into German and Russian spheres of influence, a plan that began with the invasion of Poland by both nations. It was signed in Mos-

d'Afonseca e Silva, decided to clarify the question, perhaps judging Dr. Plinio to be overly informed. He summoned him to the Episcopal Palace and, during the conversation, asked him how he had known about the episode before it happened. With simplicity, he replied:

“Your Grace, I do not know how to explain it. I only know that, in thinking over the matter, this idea came naturally to my spirit. I realize that it was not within reach of my intelligence.”

This unpretentious response shows how Dr. Plinio possessed a certain notion of the limits of his natural qualities and the extent to which he received supernatural aid; a notion that could be classified, in other words, as profound humility. But, above all, it denotes a characteristic of the gift of wisdom and the charism of prophecy: The prophet does not always have, right away, a clear awareness that the action of the Holy Spirit in his soul corresponds to such lofty gifts.

According to the teaching of St. Thomas, his mind can be enlightened by a prophetic instinct, and in this case, his position with regard to the things he knows “is sometimes such that he is unable to distinguish fully whether his thoughts are conceived of Divine instinct or of his own spirit.”¹²

In fact, Dr. Plinio made these provisions not based on rules that were known to him; but because by means of this instinct, he cast his eye on events and saw them as God sees them. St. Thomas¹³ is accurate in saying that this prophetic knowledge is the highest

kind of supernatural knowledge that man may have on this earth. While it is yet imperfect as compared to the beatific vision, which has infinite dignity because it is the vision of the essence of God,¹⁴ such knowledge is superior to that obtained through imaginative visions or other analogous wonders, to which the figure of the prophet is readily associated.

Often, when making such analyses under the influence of his prophetic instinct, Dr. Plinio did not immediately realize that this was a direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit, and attributed the source of his predictions largely to natural logic.

However, in the case described above and in countless others, the fact that his accurate predictions were confirmed, and the surprised reaction of others upon perceiving that this was not a natural phenomenon, led him to reflect on the existence of a special assistance of grace, and he eventually came to accept it.

He himself would explain many years later: “I realized that Our Lady had given me, in the natural order, certain gifts and certain natural talents, but that frequently the outcome of my thinking went further than my natural intelligence could reach.”¹⁵ ✠



Dr. Plinio did not make predictions based on rules he was familiar with, but through a certain prophetic instinct, by which he observed events and saw them as God sees them

Msgr. João in December 2013

cow on August 23, 1939, and remained in effect until June 22, 1941, when Germany invaded Russia.

⁷ After the dissolution of the German Empire in 1919, approximately three million Germans lived in the newly formed state of Czechoslovakia, in a mountainous region called the Sudetenland. The Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler, in its expansionist ambitions, demanded the annexation of this region to Germany. In the Munich Agreement, the European powers, ap-

plying the “policy of appeasement,” yielded to the Führer’s pressure, hoping to appease him. With the signing of the agreement on September 30, 1938, England and France – betraying their military alliances with Czechoslovakia – surrendered the Sudetenland to Hitler on the condition that this would be his last territorial claim. However, the Nazi leader did not keep his word, invading all of Czechoslovakia in March of the following year.

⁸ Rudolf Hess (1894–1987) was a high-ranking German official, a member of the Reich Defense Council and Hitler’s deputy. Shortly before the German invasion of Russia, he flew alone to Scotland, but broke his foot while parachuting, was apprehended by farmers and handed over to the authorities, where he was taken prisoner.

⁹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. 7 Dias em Revista. In: *Legionário*. São Paulo. Year XIV. No. 453 (May 18, 1941), p.2.

¹⁰ Idem. *Conference*. São Paulo, 13/10/1973.

¹¹ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. 7 Dias em Revista. In: *Legionário*. São Paulo. Year XIV. No. 453 (May 18, 1941), p.2.

¹² ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., q.171, a.5.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, q.174, a.2.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, I, q.25, a.6, ad 4.

¹⁵ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 9/3/1991.

The gift of prophetism

The Perpetual Echo of God's Voice

“When prophecy shall fail, the people shall be scattered abroad” (Prv 29:18 Vulgate). So, in a world as corrupt as today's, is prophecy lacking?

✠ José Antonio Blanco Soto



In ancient paganism, prophecy was an obscure function, frequently associated with esoteric rites, diviners, magic, and occultism, due not only to the mysterious atmosphere surrounding it, but also to the familiarity with which its practitioners regarded certain forces alien to the visible world. This is how all the peoples of antiquity submitted to authentic spokespersons of the devil, servants of religions that were – sometimes more, sometimes less – terrifying and inhuman.

All peoples... except one: Israel, the chosen race, the little flock of the true God. There, yes, there true prophets were to be found.

They were figures completely consecrated to the mission of being symbolic men, bearers of the messages of the Lord of Hosts, heralds of punishments and rewards, of rebukes and promises; in a word, they were men who personified, so to speak, the thought and desires of God.

We need only remember St. Elijah, a prophet who arose like fire, whose words burned like a torch. Having brought ruin upon kings and been “ready at the appointed time, it is written, to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the heart of the father to the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob” (Sir 48:10), he foresaw nothing or

almost nothing about the future. However, at the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor, Moses appeared, representing the Law, and Elijah, prophecy, as a synthesis of the entire Old Testament.

Whoever, therefore, peruses the pages of the Old Testament realizes that being a prophet is more than predicting the future.

Christian tradition defines a prophet as one who speaks in God's name, the interpreter through whom He communicates His designs to the people

The voice of God to His people

Christian tradition calls a prophet the one who speaks in the name of God, the interpreter through whom He communicates His designs and truths to the people.

This is what we find, for example, in the Book of Exodus. Despite several attempts to liberate Israel from Egyptian oppression, the enslavement of the Hebrews intensified. Faced

with failure, Moses cries out to God: “Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me?” (Ex 6:30). And the Lord answers him: “See, I make you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet” (Ex 7:1). These words make it very clear that a prophet is one who serves as the voice of the Most High.

More than half of the books of the Old Testament narrate events surrounding the lives of the prophets. In them, theology has been able to find ample material upon which to base explanations about prophecy – often unknown to a large part of Catholics in our days.

It therefore seems appropriate to bring up this vast and important topic, studying it above all in the light of a great luminary of Catholic theology, St. Thomas Aquinas.

The gift of prophecy in the words of the Angelic Doctor

First, we must consider that the gift of prophecy is part of those graces called *gratis datae*, and refers both to the knowledge of future events and to the discernment of spirits and mysteries that transcend the common truths of Faith.¹

The Angelic Doctor divides prophecy into three categories: predestination, foreknowledge, and denunciation.

The first refers to those prophecies that must necessarily be fulfilled, as they are predisposed by God to be; the acts of men do not influence the outcome, since divine designs are immutable. This category of prophesy consists of a revelation of what the Almighty will accomplish. As examples, we can recall the announcements concerning the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament.

While in this type of prophecy the individual is given to know what God will do, in foreknowledge he contemplates future events determined by the decisions of human beings. This includes, for example, the messages concerning wars or invasions during the time of the kings of Israel.

Finally, the prophecy of denunciation is that which announces the consequences of present acts, without eliminating the possibility of change as long as there is conversion and repentance on the part of men.

Jonah's announcement of the destruction of Nineveh, which resulted in the contrition of the Ninevites, is a typical example of this kind of prophecy. Scripture then points out: "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which He had said He would do to them; and He did not do it" (Jon 3:10).

However, as we said above, prophecy goes beyond simply looking at future events, and extends to everything that is useful and needs to be known for salvation. The prophetic charism also judges customs, trends, and doctrines according to the divine perspective. His pronouncements are infallible because, having been infused by God into the prophet's soul, they cannot lead to error.²

Prophetism goes beyond a mere glimpse into future events, extending to everything that is useful and needs to be known for salvation

For this reason, in the Old Testament, prophets were always at the monarch's side: for more than kings, it was the men of God who possessed the "divine criterion" to infallibly evaluate events. The sovereign who heeded the prophet's advice was granted

Heaven's blessing; as for the one who disobeyed, there was no calamity that could not befall him.

The prophet played a central role, he was like the living law, the pole to which the entire hierarchy of the chosen people had to turn in order to be pleasing to the Lord. On the other hand, in the Old Testament, touching a prophet was like touching God.

But only in the Old Testament?

The prophetic charism in the Church

Just as we tend to restrict the gift of prophecy to the simple prediction of the future, we also tend to circumscribe the actions of the prophets to the period before the Incarnation of the Word. In reality, "far from eliminating the charism of prophecy, the coming of Christ, on the contrary, brought about the expansion predicted by Moses: 'Would that all the people were prophets!' (Nm 11:29)."³

This confusion can be explained by the fact that we normally relate prophetic communication with great mystical raptures, with visions of mysterious beings or images of gigantic proportions, such as those in famous Old Testament passages. Now, St. Thomas Aquinas explains to us that "prophecy is all the



In the Old Testament, the prophet was like the living law, the focal point to which the chosen people were to turn in order to be pleasing to the Lord

From left to right: the prophets Jeremiah, Moses and Elijah – Santa Maria della Scala Museum, Siena (Italy); on the previous page, a replica of the prophet Habakkuk by Aleijadinho – Casa Lumen Maris, Ubatuba (SP)



Throughout the Church's bi-millennial history, there have always been souls chosen by God, in the manner of the prophets of old, to influence and guide humanity

St. Catherine of Siena before Pope Gregory XI – Sanctuary of Saint Catherine, Siena (Italy)

more excellent according as it needs it [imaginary vision] less.”⁴ In other words, the prophetic charism is all the more perfect the more the truths are translated by thoughts and inspirations, and less by material images.

It was logical that prophets after the Redemption would preferably be honoured with this superior mode of prophecy. However, little is said about the prophetic character in the life of the Church, despite this often being the point around which great and complex hagiographies are clarified: truly, “it would be difficult to understand the mission of many of the Saints of the Church without reference to the prophetic charism.”⁵

St. Paul himself recognizes this centrality of the spirit of prophecy when he affirms that the Church, whose cornerstone is Christ, has only two pillars as its foundation: the Apostles and the prophets (cf. Eph 2:20). This is because the prophet “is the one who knows how to read the design of God in the unfolding of events, and knows how to interpret the religious meaning of facts.”⁶

The prophetic charism is all the more perfect the more truths are expressed through thoughts and inspirations, and the less through material images

As Cardinal Charles Journet explains, the Church not only knows the revealed deposit, but it is also hers to know the state of the world and to discern spirits, through the prophets. They will know how to discern, in the divine light, the evils of their time and prescribe the true remedies: “While the masses will seem struck by blindness, while even the best will hesitate or grope, they, with supernatural and infallible instinct, will go straight to the target.”⁷

Prophecy is not dead

Against the fact that prophecy persists in our days, one could raise the following objection: the prophets of the Old Law transmitted to the people the words that Yahweh wanted to address to them; however, since the Word itself became incarnate, what more could the Most High have to say to the world? Everything has already been said...

That is quite true. But humanity has always needed – and needs today more than ever – men and women who update God’s message according to the problems of each time. Therefore, Aquinas clarifies that at no stage in history has the Church lacked someone endowed with the spirit of prophecy to guide human activity according to the designs of the Creator.⁸

Thus, based on centuries-old Christian doctrine, Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias explains that, “in addition to the official prophetism of the Old Testament, there have always been, throughout the bi-millennial journey of the Mystical Spouse of Christ, men and women, who, like the prophets of old, were chosen by God to influence humanity and guide it according to the plans of the Almighty. Such are the founders and foundresses of religious orders; the outstanding Saints who indelibly marked the civil and religious society of their times; and the dauntless Pontiffs, who with skilled and firm hand exercised the power conferred upon them by Christ Himself. Whether as clerics, religious or laypersons, these figures shone with a divine light that captivated souls and led them along the paths chosen by Divine Providence, paths which they indicated.”⁹

Is it not true that we can discern a prophetic mission in the actions of St. Benedict, patriarch of Christian Europe, or in the evangelizing feats of the sons of St. Ignatius in the Americas, as well as in their battle against the pseudo-Protestant Reformation? Or what about the fiery preachings of St. Fran-

cis of Paola, St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Louis Grignon de Montfort, and the serious admonitions that St. Catherine of Siena addressed to the Popes of her time? What, then, can be said of the luminous trajectory of St. Joan of Arc, the shepherdess from Lorraine who commanded armies, won battles, crowned the King of France, and repeatedly silenced a tribunal of scholars, guided by angelic voices and inner promptings?

The lives of those who, led by a clear movement of the Holy Spirit, fought for the rights of the Church against its enemies, internal and external, veiled or declared, very often present undeniable traces of authentic prophecy.

The grand days in which we live

All this unveils an impressive horizon: how grand is the History of the Church! Some think that glorious events no longer occur in our days, that the feats of the great men of the past are not repeated. They are mistaken!

The truth is that we live in one of the most decisive times in history. In this century in which the distinction between good and evil seems to have been abolished, in which the most elementary truths are questioned, in which each person presumes to redefine the fundamental principles of morality and reinterpret the law of God according to their own selfish criteria, in these times in which the world is heading, as never before, towards its own destruction, could God have become silent?

No! “The voice of God,” assures Msgr. João, “rings out as clearly today

as it has for two thousand years, through the Magisterium of the Holy Church [...]. But it is also heard through those

*“The voice of God,”
Msgr. João assures
us, “makes itself
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it has for two thou-
sand years, through
the Magisterium of
the Holy Church”*

who stand out for their fidelity to this Magisterium.”¹⁰

Let us not shrink back from this immense, yet glorious responsibility: as participants in Christ’s prophetic mission through Baptism, we – and no others – are called to exercise prophecy in our time, each according to our state and condition. Only this is necessary: that we be Catholics, not just in name, but in truth; fervent Catholics, with an intense sacramental life and ardent piety.

If we embrace this condition with all our soul, God will never fail to show us the paths to follow. Thus, we will be able to walk safely in the light of His divine will and lead many others to salvation. ✠



Gustavo Kralj

As participants in Christ’s prophetic mission through Baptism, we are called to exercise a prophetic role in our own time, each according to our own state in life

Our Lord teaching – Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris

¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. II-II, q.171. *Gratis datae* graces are gifts which are not strictly intended for the personal sanctification of those who receive them, but are granted for the sake of others. Prophecy falls into this category because it is directed towards the benefit of the community.

² Cf. *ibid.*, a.6.

³ BEAUCHAMP, SJ, Paul. Prophète. In: LÉON-DUFOUR, Xavier (Dir.). *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*. 13.ed. Paris: Du Cerf, 2009, p.1056.

⁴ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., q.174, a.2, ad 2.

⁵ BEAUCHAMP, op. cit., p.1057.

⁶ CIARDI, Fabio. *Los fundadores, hombres de espíritu. Para una teología del carisma de fundador*. Madrid: Paulinas, 1983, p.271.

⁷ JOURNET, Charles. *L’Église du Verbe Incarné*. Saint-Mau-

rice: Saint-Augustin, 1998, v.I, p.282-283.

⁸ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., a.6, ad 3.

⁹ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. A Prophet for Our Times*. São Paulo: Heralds of the Gospel, 2017, p.13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.14.



Mary Immortalized in History

Over the centuries, a certain spirit of Elijah, as a precious legacy, is mysteriously transmitted from generation to generation.



✠ Rúben Manuel Cunha Guimarães

As he was taken up by a whirlwind of fire, Elijah threw his mantle over Elisha, the faithful disciple. The mantle, falling folded at the feet of his successor, symbolized the twofold transmission of the master's spirit. Thus, Elijah did not die: like the sun, he simply began to shine on new horizons, for "*Elisha was filled with his spirit*" (Sir 48:12).

* * *

Malachi, the last of the twelve minor prophets, in concluding his prophecies, foretells about the end times: "*I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes*" (Mal 4:5).

* * *

John the Baptist came "*before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah*" (Lk 1:17). Jesus Himself said He saw in him "*Elijah who is to come*" (Mt 11:14). And He even promises another prophet of equivalent stature: "*Elijah does come*" (Mt 17:11).

* * *

Meditating on these passages, an inevitable conclusion arises: there is a transmission of the spirit of Elijah which, as a precious inheritance, mysteriously passes from generation to generation.

What chain timelessly links men so distant from one another in an emblematic and mystical and spiritual lineage that, using the expression of Dr. Plinio

Corrêa de Oliveira, we could call the *Eliatic line*?¹

Let us return to the patriarch of the family.

* * *

Carmel, the cloud and the promise

Coming forth like an alliance of flame and storm, Elijah caused fire to fall three times, plunging the kings into ruin (cf. Sir 48:3, 6). However, contradictory as it may seem, he was the first devotee of Mary.

When he ascended Mount Carmel to implore Yahweh to end a great drought – a symbol of humanity awaiting Redemption – he saw a small cloud that foretold abundant rain. In this tiny sign he glimpsed the "Virgin Mother of God herself, and thus the prophetic-monastic order of Carmel became entirely centred on Mary."²

On the same summit, the Tishbite established "prophets to succeed" him (Sir 48:8), not only Elisha, but also many other disciples who lived in community there, where they had been entrusted to the Mother of the Saviour. At that time, it could be said that the "sons of St. Elijah" lived practising what seems to be the flower of Elijah's piety: slavery to Our Lady.³

John the Baptist came to confirm the Marian aspect of this symbolic lineage. In everything similar to the prophets of Carmel – a virgin, an ascetic and an in-

habitant of the mountains and deserts, he lived "following the example of Elijah and Elisha"⁴.

He surpassed them, however in intimacy with the promised Virgin as, upon hearing her voice, he was sanctified through her (cf. Lk 1:44).

The spirit of Mary

When viewed from a perspective that is both prophetic and Marian, everything becomes clear. The chain that links such disparate figures to the same spirit can only be that of the slaves and devotees of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom they surrender everything, and to whom She gives herself entirely. The spirit of Elijah thus presents itself as the very spirit of Our Lady, present and active in her most beloved children: "The spirit of Mary is that of holy slavery."⁵

The Eliatic line is the repository of the Virgin's spirit in that which most characterizes a prophet: mediation between the Almighty and men, "zeal for God's glory [...], along with aquiline agility for divine contemplation and holy wrath against the demons."⁶ It is, so to speak, the historical prolongation of Mary's presence, "an immense vein that, seen as a whole, ends up presenting itself to us as an assembly of men who touched each other at least with their fingertips."⁷

Indeed, the presence of Our Lady was already felt in this land of exile before She was born.

Awaiting the prefigured One

In the Marian vein, Noah mirrored the Universal Queen, when he was moved “to invoke the merciful and just wrath of God”;⁸ by becoming the father of a new humanity, he prophesied the Mother of the redeemed.

Several other personages – such as Melchizedek and Rebekah – would represent some hues of the light that would be Mary, in the most decadent moments of the human race. They would be the bridge of faithfulness built over these abysses: whether Noah under the waves of the flood, or Melchizedek in a polytheistic setting, or Elijah during the apostasy of Israel... each one prophesied in the desert the triumphant arrival of the “Little Cloud”.

A secret guarded throughout the centuries

Then came the “fullness of the time” (Gal 4:4) [DR]. And the vein, like a glorious and narrow isthmus, encountered the continent it longed for: Mary. Finally, that sacred chain that had mysteriously coordinated the prophets of the Virgin-Mother would link, in the light of midday, her slaves of love.

St. John the Evangelist, through the mission that Jesus entrusted to him on the Cross to receive Mary into his home (cf. Jn 19:27), appears as the

first one responsible for this epiphany. In those moments of filial intimacy, it seems inconceivable that the Mother of the Church would not confide to him the secrets of her Heart, in particular regarding a closer relationship with her, later called the *slavery of love*. Then followed, throughout history, a movement of special tenderness from those who placed themselves under the patronage of Our Lady.

To cite an early example, the oldest Marian prayer, the *Sub tuum praesidium*, a song of the soul of a servant who places himself in the hands of his Lady, is noteworthy: “We fly to thy patronage, O Holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin!”

If we also open the hagiography of the 10th century, we will find yet another example. In a solitary chapel, St. Odilo, abbot of Cluny, perpetually consecrated himself as a slave of the glorious Virgin.⁹

Proceeding past St. Bernard, St. Catherine of Siena and many other tabernacles of this special devotion, we discover, in the 18th century, “a man of fire, endowed with the spirit and strength of Elijah: St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort.”¹⁰ It pertained to him to proclaim to the four winds the secret guarded by the Marian line:

to become “the loving slaves of our Blessed Lady in order to become more perfect slaves of Jesus.”¹¹

Until the end of the world

After the Apostle of Mary, did this lineage of the Virgin, which perpetuates her in moments of greatest moral catastrophe, come to an end? No.

In the very book in which he reveals this slavery, St. Louis also prophesies those who would be the last links in the Marian chain: “They will be true apostles of the latter times [...] the blood-stained standard of the Cross on their shoulders. They will carry the crucifix in their right hand and the rosary in their left [...] Such are the great men who are to come. By the will of God Mary is to prepare them to extend His rule over the impious.”¹²

Only this explains that, according to the Fathers of the Church, Elijah “will come in the second coming of the Saviour.”¹³ It will be his spirit, or rather the spirit of the slaves of Mary, that will confront the Antichrist (cf. Rev 11:3-12). But, since “now many antichrists have come” (1 Jn 2:18), it is not possible for the Mother and Lady to forsake her children and devotees. Therefore, “in our turbulent times, which resemble a long, dark night, we should ask for this spirit of Elijah to return to shine over the world.”¹⁴ ✠

¹ Cf. CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *O dom de sabedoria na mente, vida e obra de Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira* [The gift of Wisdom in the Mind, Life and Work of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira]. Città del Vaticano-São Paulo: LEV; Lumen Sapientiae, 2016, v.III, p.316.

² FANTI, Bartolomé; XIBERTA, OCarm, M. *La fiesta de la Virgen del Carmen*, apud LÓPEZ MELÚS, OCarm, Rafael María. *El profeta San Elías. Padre espiritual del Carmelo*. Onda: Amacar, 1986, p.138.

³ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 20/7/1983.

⁴ CASSIANO. *Collationes*. Colatio XVIII, n.6: CSEL 13, 512.

⁵ LHOUMEAU, Antonin. *La vie spirituelle à l'école du Bienheureux L.-M. Grignion de Montfort*. 4.ed. Tours: Alfred Mame et Fils, 1920, p.221.

⁶ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *Mary Most Holy: The Paradise of God Revealed to Men*. São Paulo: Heralds of the Gospel, 2025, v.III, p.56.

⁷ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Talk*. Amparo, 26/2/1966.

⁸ CLÁ DIAS, *Mary Most Holy: The Paradise of God Revealed to Men*, op. cit., p.52.

⁹ See the article *In Body, Freed by a Miracle; in Soul, Freed by Slavery* in this issue.

¹⁰ CLÁ DIAS, *Mary Most Holy: The Paradise of God Revealed to Men*, op. cit., p.105.

¹¹ ST. LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONFORT.

Treatise of True Devotion to Mary, n.75.

¹² Ibid., n.58-59

¹³ ST. JEROME. *Comentários ao Evangelho de São Mateus*, L.III, c.17: PL 26, 124; cf. ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO. *Epistola* 193, c.III, n.5.

¹⁴ CLÁ DIAS, EP, João Scognamiglio. *The Power of Eternal Predestination*. In: *New Insights on the Gospels*. Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV; Heralds of the Gospel, 2014, v.VII, p.83.



Beware of False Prophets!



✠ Fr. Felipe de Azevedo Ramos, EP

Fraud has been a part of human life ever since the Fall in Paradise: original sin arose precisely through a deception of the Serpent, and its ravages did not end there... After Sarah laughed at the divine promise that she would bear a son in her old age, she lied to God, denying that she had committed so frivolous an act (cf. Gn 18:10–15). Joseph’s brothers misled Jacob by suggesting that his favourite son had been devoured by a wild beast (cf. Gn 37:33). Finally, the deicide itself was brought about by the duplicity of Judas, the traitor par excellence.

While dissimulation is ubiquitous in history, aversion to it seems no less universal. St Augustine’s famous remark is well known: “I have had experience of many who wished to deceive, but not one who wished to be deceived” (*Confessions*, Book X, ch.23, n.33). There are, of course, many levels of distortion of the truth. The worst of them all is, without doubt, that of a religious nature, for, as he remarks in another work, it constitutes the “first and capital lie, far to be fled from” (*On Lying*, Ch. XIV, n. 25).

Under this prism, on July 14, 1269, St. Thomas Aquinas delivered a sermon on the following passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” (7:15–16). This sermon became known by the Latin opening words of the first verse: *Attendite a falsis prophetis*.¹

How to discern a false prophet?

Aquinas’ intention with the sermon is crystal clear: to warn his listeners against the snares of evildoers, in particular their most harmful kind, that of false prophets. Thus, to better understand them, he begins by defining the nature of the true prophet.

The term *prophet* admits four meanings: 1) the person who is the *object* of divine revelation; 2) the one who *understands* the revealed things; 3) the one who *announces* the revealed

False prophets do not teach; they deceive. As relativists, they disguise themselves in the guise of sheep and use sophistic arguments to undermine the Faith

things; 4) the one who *performs miracles*, like Elisha, who, even after death, “prophesied” (Sir 48:14), that is, “performed prophetic miracles” (1.2.4). Christ Himself was considered a prophet by the Jews because of the wonders He performed (cf. Lk 7:16).

Having established this standard, how then to identify a false prophet? The Angelic Doctor offers four criteria for falsehood: of doctrine, of inspiration, of intention, and of life.

First of all, false prophets do not teach, they misguide. Authentic prophecy is centred on truth. By distorting it, the heretic Arius gained followers, intending to “correct” the very doctrine of Christ (cf. 1.3.1). Now, how many in history, even to our day, have not followed the same paths, propagating a morality antagonistic to the Gospel? False prophets!

The pseudo-prophets are also relativists: “they affirm that good is evil and that evil is good” (1.3.1). Here Aquinas refers not only to the publicists of blatant error, but also to the subtle manipulators of truth, who act according to personal convenience. This is the case of the one who utters false praise to minimize the real achievements of his neighbour, or the one who, under an adulterated interpretation of the consecrated vocation, “prevents others from entering religious life” (1.3.1). This is an “erroneous and treacherous teaching” (*Against Retracting*, ch. XVI).

Falsity of inspiration is yet another clear indication for discerning prophecy. This occurs when the subject is no longer moved by the Divine Paraclete, but by the devil – as Jeremiah points out: “the prophets prophesied by Baal” (Jer 2:8) – or by his own spirit, conduct harshly rebuked by the Lord: “Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!” (Ez 13:3).

From this perspective, St. Thomas unmasks the buffoons self-proclaimed as wise: they arrogantly repeat the lucubrations of the sophists, while at the same time belittling the Faith. False



prophets! Disdaining them, Aquinas asserts: “An old woman today knows more about things pertaining to Faith than all the philosophers of old” (1.3.2.b).

As for intention, the judgement is severe. Grasping at profit, at temporal advantages or fame are unmistakable signs of bad faith, as in the Machiavelianism of Simon Magus (cf. Acts 8:9-24). The Angelic Doctor compares this sin to adultery, for such dissimulation adulterates the Word of God.

Finally, unlike Christ, who “began by acting and teaching” (Acts 1:1), the false prophet “teaches one thing but lives another” (1.3.4). The conduct of the true prophet is always congruent with his message.

Sheep’s clothing: the tricks of false prophets

False prophets disguise themselves as sheep in order to conceal their malice under the mask of virtue. By this trickery, they will “deceive many” (Mt 24:5), even forming an “evil generation” (Mt 16:4).

While the true sheep hear the voice of the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn 10:27), the imposters make a masquerade of holiness. The purpose is clear: to delude the good. To this end, they use four fictitious “garments”: adoration, righteousness, penance, and innocence.

With the “garment” of adoration, the wolves dressed up as sheep usurp the place of the Shepherd. As they strive, in their prayers, to be seen by men (cf. Mt 6:5), they end up demanding for themselves the worship exclusive to God; consequently, they can well be called “false Christs” (Mt 24:24).

The “garment” of righteousness is sewn in the Pharisaic model, which requires a stage to strut about: “Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do” (Mt 6:1-2).

The “garment” of penance is a sham of virtue, pure outward show. Fasting does not serve for mortification of the

flesh or spiritual progress, but for public display. Circumspection is necessary, for “it may belong to boasting that a person uses a poorer garment than his station requires” (2.2.3). Pride is not only adorned with sumptuous garments, but can pose as false poverty, under the guise of austerity.

Finally, there is the “garment” of innocence. Wolves feign purity, but they are like “whitewashed tombs [...] full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Mt 23:27).

Wolves are hypocrites: how to unmask them?

The hypocrite is a predator: just as the wolf pursues the flock, he plunders the goods of body and soul. The wolf’s wrath shows itself merciless: it seeks to scatter the sheep (cf. Jn 10:12), sparing no effort to seize them; its voracity is insatiable (cf. Acts 20:29).

The sheep’s main precaution consists in discernment, whose golden rule the Divine Master bequeathed to us: “By their fruits you will know them.” If “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace” (Gal 5:22), the fruit of these beasts can only be rottenness. Charity does not reside in them, but rather unbridled ambition: they always want the first places (cf. Mt 23:6).

Furthermore, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34). The words of these charlatans reflect their inner selves. They may even utter truths, articulate eloquent speeches, but sooner or later, the mask will fall.

The evil pack, always lurking to take in the unwary, is recognizable by its actions. It reveals itself through agitation and impatience because, as the Book of Proverbs teaches, “the fruits of the wicked is trouble; [...] The learning of a man is known by patience” (15:6; 19:11).

The wolves in sheep’s clothing will continue to exist until the definitive coming of Christ. They “will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But take heed; I have told you all things beforehand” (Mk 13:22-23). If the machinations of these false prophets are tremendous, even greater must be the antidotes to combat them. For us, everything is defined by faithfulness: “this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (1 Jn 5:4). ✠

¹ The division of the text is based on the translation published in: *Lumen Veritatis*. São Paulo. Year X. No. 38 (Jan.-March, 2017), p.101-117.

Like an insatiably voracious wolf that pursues the flock in order to scatter the sheep and devour them, the hypocrite preys on the goods of both body and soul

“The Wolf and the Sheep,” by Jean-Baptiste Oudry



The Messianic Prophet

Isaiah illuminated the history of the Hebrew people, enriched Scripture with his magnificent prophecies, furthermore proclaiming the glories of the Messiah and the Church with his own life.

✠ Sr. Mary Teresa MacIsaac

Praised by Sacred Scripture as a “holy prophet” and “faithful in the sight of God” (Sir 48:23, 25), Isaiah is recognized for the extensive duration of his public life and the rich content of his writings. Considered the first of the four major prophets of the Old Testament, he was a key figure in Hebrew history and an ardent herald of messianic salvation. His name, quite appropriately, means *God saves*.

As is proper to the prophetic vocation, his predictions transcend the immediate context of his time: they apply to Our Lord Jesus Christ and the redemptive work He accomplished, as well as to the trajectory of the Holy Church. His prophecies even shed light on our day and age.

A deeper look at his life and mission will help us to better understand his writings, frequently found in the readings of the Holy Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, as well as reveal to us the grandeur of the plans that God charted for humanity.

The prophet of hope

Son of Amos (cf. Is 1:1; 2:1), Isaiah was born around

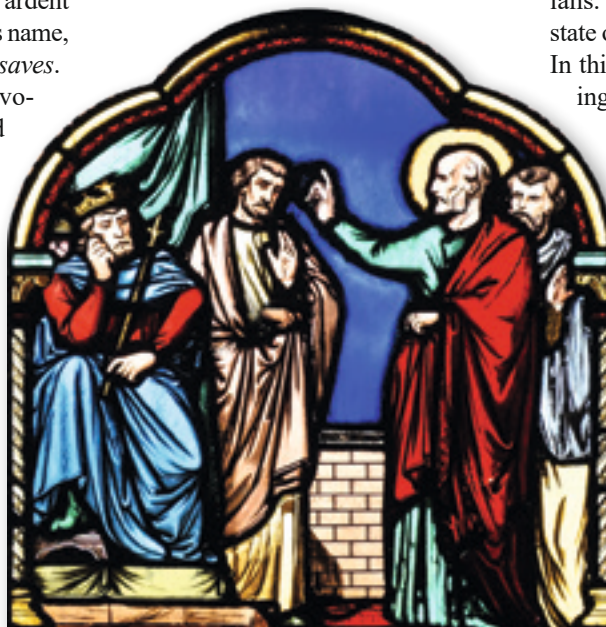
770-760 BC. His writings and precise indications about Jerusalem suggest that he originated from the capital of Judah, as they denote a superior culture, unlikely to have been acquired in smaller cities. His prophetic ministry began during the reign of Uzziah; in 740 BC – the year of the monarch’s death – the young

prophet, around twenty years old, was already carrying out his mission in Jerusalem, also encompassing the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.¹

Isaiah lived in a turbulent period in Hebrew history involving the Syro-Ephraimite crisis and the invasion of Tiglath-Pileser III,² king of the Assyrians. In his land, the Jews were in a state of great moral and religious laxity. In this scenario, the prophet’s preaching takes on two aspects: encouraging the people against their enemies, with the promise of the Saviour’s life – this is the period of the prophecies about Emmanuel, the “God with us” (Is 7:14; cf. Mt 1:20-23) – and the vehement rebuke for the state of lack of love of the Lord.

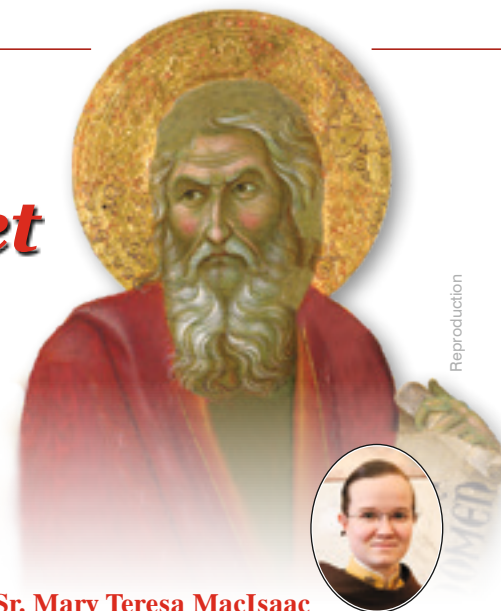
Isaiah refers to God emphatically as “the Holy One of Israel” (Is 10:20), to exhort the people to be holy as He is holy. In his oracles, the Lord is presented enveloped in majesty, enthroned as King of the universe and Judge of the nations and, in particular, of the chosen people.

Amidst words of fear and hope, the prophet encourages the descendants of Da-



Isaiah lived during a turbulent period in Jewish history. In his homeland, the Jews were in a state of great moral and religious decline

The Prophet before King Uzziah - Church of the Sacred Heart, Moulins (France); top right, Isaiah, by Ugolino di Nerio - National Gallery, London



Reproduction

vid, summoning them to the paths of virtue; but he does not hesitate to announce the ruin of Israel and Judah as a necessary consequence of their infidelities. In the third chapter of his book, for example, he prophesies the anarchy that would be established in Judah at the time of the Babylonian invasion: “For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counsellor and the skilful magician and the expert in charms. And I will make boys their princes, and babes shall rule over them” (Is 3:1-4).

Eternal prophecies

This was, in general terms, the historical context of Isaiah’s ministry. However, when reading his writings, one perceives that God had a broader intention with the prophet’s preaching. His words have two levels of interpretation: one relating to the era in which he lived; the other, to the future.

The beginning of his prophetic mission is an example of this. In a mystical vision, a seraph touches his lips with a burning coal and sends him to prophecy. The celestial messenger commands him to announce that, as divine punishment, the cities of the chosen people would be deserted, the houses empty, and the lands abandoned (cf. Is 6:11). He concludes by stating: “And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump” (Is 6:13).

This passage, in addition to applying to the actual situation of the Hebrews at that time, has a profound relevance to the future foundation of the Holy

Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ established His Church from the “remnant of Israel” (Jer 31:7), the “tenth” considered as His chosen people, and made “holy seed” to take root throughout the earth.

Another Isaian oracle clearly applies to the figure of the Messiah and the Church. The prophet addresses Shebna, a minister of the palace, and announces to him that his powers would be

which is the confession of the true Faith. This key, the Saviour carried on His shoulders to the summit of Golgotha, and thus what He obtained at the price of His Blood, that is, the forgiveness of sins and other fruits of Redemption, can never be “shut”.

A forewarning to the Hebrew priesthood

This same prophecy goes on to warn about the decline of Hebrew priestly authority. At the beginning of the passage, God commands: “Go, get thee in to him that dwelleth in the tabernacle” (Is 22:15 Vulgate), and describes the image of a peg driven into a firm place, a symbol of stability and honour. Then, he announces: “In that day, says the Lord of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a sure place will give way; and it will be cut down and fall, and the burden that was upon it will be cut off” (Is 22:25).

Once again we find Isaiah’s words crowned with two parallel meanings, for this prophecy is also fulfilled, and perhaps even more fittingly, in the announcement of the Apostles shaking their sandals when faced with the rejection of their preaching in the name of Jesus (cf. Mt 10:14), as well as in the Saviour’s lament over the Holy City: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see Me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Mt 23:37-39).

“The glory of the Lord will be revealed”

Equally eloquent are the passages in which the prophet exhorts the Israelites to confidence, promising divine intervention in events, in their favour. His



It is clear from the writings of Isaiah that God had a broader purpose in mind for the prophet’s preaching

The Prophet Isaiah, by Matija Bradaška - St. Peter’s Church, Črnomelj (Slovenia)

transferred to Eliakim, son of Hilkiah (cf. Is 22:15-22), stating that he would clothe himself with his tunic and gird himself with his belt. Finally, he prophesies: “And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open” (Is 22:22).

St. Jerome³ comments that the name Eliakim means *resurrected God* or *Resurrection of God*. The Holy Doctor relates the expulsion of Shebna from ministry to the transition from the Old Covenant to the Catholic Church, in

descriptions transcend immediate chronology and extend, with admirable precision, to the foundation of the Holy Church: the new “chosen race” and “holy nation” (1 Pt 2:9) which, united by one Baptism and one faith, would become a visible sign of God’s glory among the nations, bringing to the whole world the joy of salvation and the forgiveness of sins.

In this sense, the exhortation overflowing with hope that opens chapter 40, and has been immortalized by the initial movements of Handel’s oratorio *Messiah*, is incomparable:

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.’ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken” (Is 40:1-5).

Isaiah, a living prophecy

A distinctive characteristic of the prophetic office, also observed in figures like Hosea, is that the prophet’s life is a tapestry of symbolic signs.

God not only speaks through Isaiah; He makes him embody, in his own personal and family life, the substance of His message. The prophet himself becomes a living prophecy.



Reproduction

Particularly eloquent are the passages in which the prophet urges the Israelites to have confidence, promising divine intervention in events on their behalf

Vision of Isaiah – Church of Our Lady of Good Help, Neuvizy (France)

An example of this are the names Isaiah gave to his two sons.

One of them was called Shearjashub, which means *a remnant will return* (cf. Is 7:3), a promise repeated several times in his prophecies regarding a chosen portion of the elect people who would survive divine punishment and be faithful to the Lord.

The other son was called Mahershalhashbaz, which means *quick theft, swift plunder* (cf. Is 8:1). Regarding him, God said to the prophet: “Call his name Mahershalhashbaz; for before the child knows how to cry ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria” (Is 8:3-4).

However, much more than in the onomastics of his descendants, it was in his own life that Isaiah personified his prophecies, through what he suffered

and the complete accomplishment of the divine will.

We find in his writings the famous oracle about the suffering Servant, a figure interpreted by Christian exegesis as the Messiah. The Lord wished to crush Him with expiatory sufferings, consolidating a lasting lineage and successfully carrying out the designs of God (cf. Is 53:10).

The prophet not only foresaw this mystery but anticipated the *Via Crucis* of his Lord. Indeed, by following a path of unwavering faithfulness, he suffered persecutions that culminated in martyrdom: according to tradition, he was sawn in half alive by order of King Manasseh, around the year 668 BC.

Isaiah thus fulfilled his

vocation entirely, proclaiming the glories of the Saviour almost eight centuries before His birth. ✠

¹ Cf. SCHUSTER, Ignacio; HOLZAMMER, Juan B. *Historia Bíblica. Exposición documental fundada en las investigaciones científicas modernas*. Barcelona: Editorial Litúrgica Española, 1934, t.I, p.630-631.

² Tiglath-Pileser III initiated a military campaign against Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. Syria and Israel (referred to as Ephraim, as it was the most influential tribe in the northern kingdom) sought to unite with the kingdom of Judah to free themselves from paying certain tributes, but Ahaz, king of Judah, refused. Therefore, Syria and Israel invaded Judah. The Syro-Ephraimite crisis was, therefore, the situation resulting from these military confrontations.

³ Cf. ST. JEROME. *Commentary on Isaiah*. L.VII, n.306.



Lay Participation in Christ's Prophetic Office

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§904 Christ fulfils this prophetic office, not only by the hierarchy but also by the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with the sense of the faith [*sensus fidei*] and the grace of the word

In this paragraph, the *Catechism* teaches that the Saviour exercises His prophetic mission not only through ordained ministers, but also through the laity, who, through Baptism, are incorporated into Our Lord and participate in His threefold office: the priestly, the prophetic, and the royal.

What does it mean to participate in Christ's prophetic office? Following the example of the ancient prophets and the supreme model of the Divine Redeemer, the layperson exercises this office in two complementary ways.

First, it is their responsibility to *proclaim* God's rights and the full obedience due to Him. By exhorting their contemporaries to conversion, they promote the reign of Christ in hearts and throughout society.¹

Second, to achieve these goals, this mission is carried out by *denouncing* the obstacles, particularly sin. As the *Catechism* itself emphasizes, "to the eyes of faith no evil is graver than sin and nothing has worse consequences for sinners themselves, for the Church, and for the whole world."² It is necessary to dispel the misconception that a prophet is merely a predictor of the future; in reality, as the Scriptures and hagiographies attest, the essence of prophecy consists in translating the "voice of God" into the present, pointing out error and calling men to conversion.

This is a true and authentic program for life. Although the circumstances of

action in the world are innumerable, two areas reveal themselves to be of paramount importance in the "prophetic" life of the laity:

1) The witness of coherence in the social setting: laypeople glorify God by observing the Commandments in the fabric of their daily interactions. The most eloquent proclamation is integrity, that is, harmony between speech and conduct, as St. John exhorts: "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth" (1 Jn 3:18).

2) The witness in the domestic Church: within the family, laypeople exercise their prophetic role by building a home imbued with faith and piety. Mutual charity between spouses should reign there, from which a good example will emanate to the children, so that they may learn to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-14).

The prophets, as the chosen messengers of the Most High, were above all men of profound prayer. In intimate communion with the Lord, they received light to discern the truth and strength to proclaim it.

By applying the voice of God to the present through observance of the Commandments and by building a home imbued with faith and piety, lay people fulfil their prophetic calling

St. Anne teaches the Commandments to the child Mary – Notre-Dame de la Tronchaye Church, Rochefort-en-Terre (France)

Likewise, only through assiduous supplication – especially through the intercession of the Queen of Prophets – and frequent reception of the Sacraments will the laity receive the graces necessary to make secular life consistent with their prophetic calling, as an authentic echo of the Word of God. ✚

¹ Cf. PIUS XI. *Quas primas*, n.34.

² CCC 1488.





The Frog, the Lion and the Cross...

From national flags to multinational company logos, remnants of the forgotten art of heraldry permeate our daily lives.

✠ **Íñigo María de Oyarzábal Gutiérrez-Barquín**



The frog transformed into a prince: this is one of the fables before which history makes obeisance, for in it the marvellous boldly unites with the real. According to the Gaulish myth, when the barbarian King Clovis (c. 466-511) was about to wage a decisive battle, a hermit came to meet him bringing a message from Heaven. An Angel ordered the monarch, as yet unbaptized, to replace his royal emblem – three frogs on a red background! – with a symbol that, from then on, would represent the king of the Franks: the fleur-de-lis.¹

A question: was this modification to the royal standard strictly necessary to win the battle? Perhaps not. But the real question is another: could Clovis possibly have kept his frogs upon embracing the Catholic Faith?

From the answer that inevitably comes to baptized lips, it follows that the change made there was not a mere practical measure: it was above all a providential practical measure. In what sense?

The art of symbols

Much more than a simplified version of a lily's outline, the fleur-de-lis is a symbol. And a symbol, by nature, associates two realities in the mind: the ex-

isting reality, such as a plant or an animal, and that which it represents. Thus, one can speak of the purity of the lily or the royalty of the lion, not because they possess these characteristics in themselves, but because man discovers deeper meanings in them through analogy.

Dr. Plinio affirmed that “symbols are so important that God made the whole of creation in order to give man-

kind symbols that would lead them to love Him.”² The art that makes use of symbolic emblems on coats of arms to represent people, lineages and even nations is called heraldry. It is a sort of catapult that propels us from the visible to the invisible, from tangible realities to higher considerations.

Even today, remnants of this forgotten art – present on national flags, on episcopal coats of arms and even in the logos of multinational companies – permeate our daily lives, spanning the centuries... For the origins of heraldry date back millennia.

From battlefields to palaces and corporations

Horses neighing, metals clashing, piercing cries of suffering or shouts of victory echoing across the plain... amidst the chaos of battle, it is essential to distinguish one's allies and be easily recognized. For this reason, medieval knights began to display certain figures on their garments and shields to identify themselves. The emblem was more visible on a shield, and these representations were christened with the name “coats of arms.” Heraldry first made itself heard amidst the war cries and the anguish of agony...

The choice of figures and colours – which had a fundamen-



Heraldry is a kind of catapult that propels us from the visible to the invisible, from tangible realities to higher considerations

“Clovis Receives the fleur-de-lis”, by the Master of Bedford – British Library, London

tally practical purpose – brought with it the desire to portray the knight who bore them in the most striking way possible. The lion, king of animals, also reigned supreme in heraldry at that time as the preferred figure, appearing in about fifteen percent of European coats of arms.³ And these, as time went on, came to represent not only the warrior, but also families, prelates, civil and religious communities... Heraldry left the battlefields and sat by the hearths of homes, in episcopal palaces and, finally, in the offices of various corporations.

With the proliferation of coats of arms, disputes began – well into the 13th century – over the most beautiful and, therefore, most sought-after insignias. It was therefore necessary to establish certain rules for their creation.

Once the kings decided that those responsible for this work would be the heralds – officials of the medieval monarchies – this art became known as heraldry.

Ten Million Coats of Arms

Over time, coats of arms permeated all social strata, from the royal court to the simplest artisans. The Bellenville catalogue, dating from the 14th century, lists more than thirteen hundred significant shields from all over Europe. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, almost ten million have been identified!⁴

“Goodness is eminently diffusive” as the old adage affirms. Indeed, what “publicity” was used to spread heraldic shields throughout Europe? It seems that their proliferation is simply due to the spirit of the marvellous and of “enmarvelability” of those people.

If our society – let it be said parenthetically – still had such a pursuit of sacredness and perfection, so characteristic of innocent souls, even in seemingly superfluous things, perhaps it would not have lost a certain joy and dignity that so characterized life in the past.

Unfortunately, even if “abuse does not prevent use,” it at least deteriorates it. Over time, heraldry became a platform for vanities, where nobles flaunted their lineages and boasted of their prowess. But there was no longer any space in it for the Omnipresent One...

Such was the shield crafted in the 19th century by Richard Plantagenet, Marquis of Chandos, composed of no less than seven hundred and nineteen quarterings, symbols of his ancestry.⁵ From the representations of the noble ideals of yesteryear, there was a shift to extravagance, which lost its deeper meaning in overstatement.

And today, does heraldry have any application?

The coat of arms of God

The winged lion, the double-headed eagle: these are two fascinating images that exist only in heraldry.

However, there is a much more mythical and transcendent figure, and it was this one that God chose for Himself.

Some have tried to create an imaginary coat of arms that could belong to the Holy Trinity.⁶ But, many centuries before, the Lord Himself had already claimed His own emblem: the Cross.

“Catholics have taken the Cross,” emphasizes Dr Plinio, “as a sign of honour, as a symbol of all that is most



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“Catholics have embraced the Cross as a sign of honour, as a symbol of all that is most sacred”

Coat of arms of György Császka, Bishop of Spiš – Church of the Immaculate Conception, Starý Smokovec (Slovakia); at the top of the page, a detail of the coat of arms of the Marquis of Chandos

sacred and holy. And here we can see three manifestations of the era of faith: the cross placed at the top of crowns; the cross as a heraldic symbol of the noblest honours bestowed upon families of the high aristocracy; and the cross used as the insignia for military decorations.”⁷

Let us therefore, as proud defenders of the Faith, take up this divine coat of arms, from which hangs Jesus Christ Himself, like a standard with which He invested each of His disciples: “If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Lk 9:23). ✠

¹ Cf. DEMOUY, Patrick. *Le sacre du Roi. Histoire, symbolique, cérémonial*. Estrasburgo: La Nuée Bleue, 2016, p.46.

³ Cf. PASTOREAU, Michel. *Heraldry. Its Origins and Meaning*. Londres: Thames and Hudson, 2004, p.58.

⁵ Cf. MESSÍA DE LA CERDA Y PITA, Luis F. *Heráldica española. El diseño heráldico*. Madrid: Edimat, 1998, p.21.

⁷ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 14/9/1965.

² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conversation*. São Paulo, 25/5/1983.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p.20; 25; 55.

⁶ Cf. PASTOREAU, op. cit., p.86.



Storytime with Dona Lucilia

Like a good mother, she knew how to take advantage of every opportunity for the moral development of her children: from carefree outings to reading entertaining children's stories.



✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

Physical activity has an important place in the upbringing of children, since they need to expend their natural energy by running, jumping and playing. We have seen how Dona Lucilia strove to stimulate the aptitudes of her children so that vulgarity would not gain entrance to their souls, not even in day-to-day activities, such as outdoor childhood games.

Germanically healthful outings...

It was almost always the *Fräulein* Mathilde Heldmann, the German governess of Plinio and Rosée, who took them on outings to Antarctica Park and Luz Gardens.

With methodical, Germanic precision she would oblige the boy to get his exercise, for he was not much given to physical effort. Plinio would run just long enough to avoid trouble with her and then go back to amusing himself after his own fashion, contemplating the beautiful colouring of carefree butterflies fluttering in the sunlight amid the trees and the like.

Sometimes Dona Lucilia had the children accompany her when she visited the mineral water springs at Águas da Prata resort in the state of Minas

Gerais which were highly recommended for alleviating liver problems.

Not even there did the *Fräulein* neglect the outings. In fact, she was so zealous about them that Dona Lucilia



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**From the stories of Bécassine,
Dona Lucilia sought to draw
lessons that would help
her children live well in society**

Plinio, aged eleven, at Águas da Prata;
on the following page, scenes from
the Bécassine stories

became a little anxious. But hearing the *Fräulein* extol the benefits of these excursions she finally gave in, while not entirely convinced the children would not overtax themselves.

Such an idea never crossed the dedicated German's mind. Taking the little ones by the hand, she would briskly set off to climb the surrounding hills, convinced that a good hike in the pure mountain air could only benefit her pupils' health.

With motherly affection, Dona Lucilia sought to compensate the children for their efforts when, at times, they showed but meagre enthusiasm for their walks. Therefore, stays in Águas da Prata were not devoid of pastimes to their liking – the first of which was being in their mother's company.

And this took on a special attraction when she read aloud the stories of Bécassine.

Bécassine, in Águas da Prata

To provide Rosée with good reading material, Dona Lucilia bought her a subscription to a French children's magazine, *La Semaine de Suzette*. It featured a series of stories of Bécassine, a quaint and ingenuous Breton peasant girl, gifted with little intelligence but lots of common sense.

The stories had a host of characters, representative of several human types of French society of the time. One of the most interesting was *Madame la*

Marquise de Grand Air, the mistress of a beautiful *château* in Brittany, whom Bécassine served as a devoted housemaid from early youth.

Another prominent figure was Bécassine's affable uncle Corentin, a typical "notable" of the hamlet of Clocher-les-Bécasses.

The stories were narrated by means of coloured drawings in little boxes, accompanied by the text, which made them highly appealing to the children. These cartoons, attributed to the spirited *Commandant* Pinchon, were so successful that French sociologists affirm their value as scientific documents today.

But Dona Lucilia's young listeners mostly cherished the comments with which she punctuated the reading – in French of course, since she held that this should be the second language of every cultivated person.

With her fine-tuned psychological sense, she praised certain attitudes the characters took, drawing a moral from them. She explained French customs and etiquette so that her children would gradually learn how to live in society.

Enjoyable hours spent together

Maternal love is boundless, and Dona Lucilia never thought that she dedicated too much time to instructing her children, even to the detriment of her own comfort.

During the first stays in Águas da Prata, Dona Lucilia and her family occupied three adjoining rooms at the Costa Hotel. Life at this isolated thermal resort in the countryside of the

State of São Paulo differed from life in the capital, especially for the children. They had fewer lessons and assignments from the *Fräulein* and more time to be with Dona Lucilia.

The small city, not far from *Poços de Caldas* ("Hot Spring Wells"), seemed lost in the pastoral expanse. The hotel was a charming and traditional establishment, but old and somewhat poorly designed, for passers-by on the street could easily see into the rooms, since the windows were quite low. For this reason, Dona Lucilia, who had to rest frequently because of her liver pains, kept the shutters closed.

In the afternoon, after their nap, the children would go to their mother's room. The room was dim, with only shafts of light filtering through the shutters. They opened the door quietly, came in and turned on the bedside lamp. One of them snuggled close to Dona Lucilia, and with an arm over the pillow and *La Semaine de Suzette* in hand, asked:

"Mama dear, can we talk about Bécassine?"

The delightful hours spent in this way would be forever treasured by the children. The light slowly receded from the shutters giving way to nightfall. Never once did Dona Lucilia hint to the children that they had come at a bad time or that she was tired.

Redoubled expressions of affection

Once the roles were reversed; Plinio fell ill in Águas da Prata and had to take to bed.

Every afternoon, Dona Lucilia went to her son's room with a copy of Bécassine in her hand. Seated by his side she would pass the time, describing the adventures of the picturesque Breton peasant. As her delicate fingers leafed through the pages, the boy drank in her gilded descriptions.

Despite his mother's doting care, the boy did not improve. He came down with a sore throat, then a rash. The doctor did not know what to make of it. Dona Lucilia redoubled her loving attentions, staying by Plinio's side almost the entire time, striving to make the hours pass by more pleasantly for him.

There is no doubt that her agreeable companionship sped up the hands of the clock during ten unforgettable days.

This paradisiacal arrangement, however, came to an abrupt end when Dr. João Paulo – despite Dona Lucilia's fears – opted for drastic measures. He wrapped the boy in blankets and boarded a train for São Paulo with the family. When they disembarked at Luz Station the sickness had disappeared as if by magic. ✧

Taken, with minor adaptations,
from: *Dona Lucilia*.
Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV;
Heralds of the Gospel,
2013, p.212-216



August 28 - St. Augustine of Hippo



Francisco Lecaros



Great in Thought, Great in Holiness

A paradigm in human history and the history of the Church, whose spiritual journey, closely linked to the temporal, bequeaths to us a precious lesson for our modern lives.



✠ Sr. Maria Teresa Ribeiro Matos

Sicut *Augustinus dicit* – as Augustine says,” became a frequent expression in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. The Bishop of Hippo is cited around three thousand times in the *Summa Theologiae*. Numerous documents of the Ecclesiastical Magisterium and dogmatic treatises are also based on the doctrine of one who is undoubtedly one of the greatest luminaries of Theology. Boldly original theses have passed unchallenged throughout the centuries, due only to the authority of the one who enunciated them. However, perhaps less commented on than *Augustinus dicit* would be *Augustinus vixit*...

How did he live? What did he teach about how to live? Endowed with great intelligence and no less capacity for love, St. Augustine kept his way of life consistent with his way of thinking. While he lived given over to his passions, he followed the heresy of Mani; and upon embracing the true doctrine with fervour, how did he come to live?

His existence could be analysed from diverse perspectives: from his profound philosophical studies to his meticulous studies of the spiritual process, including considerations on the omnipotence of maternal tenderness in

prayer. In all of this, the Saint would be a paradigm. But let us limit ourselves to one of his most eloquent legacies, an image of each phase of his journey: how he organized his way of life.

On the paths of sin

Tagaste was a small town in Numidia, in Proconsular Africa. Today it is called Souk Ahras, located in the far east of Algeria, near the border with Tunisia. Augustine was born there on November 13, 354, inheriting from his father, Patricius, something of Roman culture and from his mother, Monica, a seed of Catholic Faith and Christian life. However, according to the customs of the time, he did not receive Baptism in childhood.

Patricius was very zealous about the boy's education, providing everything that could establish him well in the world. However, Augustine laments: “Yet this same father did not trouble himself how I grew towards You, nor how chaste I was, so long as I was skilful in speaking.”¹

During his studies in Madaura and Carthage, as well as during an idly spent interval in Tagaste, the young man gave into vices, sometimes out of vanity, sometimes even out of malice,

despite his mother's warnings: “For I even longed in my youth formerly to be satisfied with worldly things, and I dared to grow wild again with various and shadowy loves! [...] But I held it not in moderation, mind to mind, the bright path of friendship.”²

About a year after his arrival in Carthage, in the year 370, a son, Adeodatus, was born to him, the fruit of a sinful union, in whose bonds Augustine remained for many years.

Despite this, and perhaps already through the prayers of St. Monica, a yearning for the pursuit of wisdom awakened in his soul upon reading Cicero's work *Hortensius*. This desire also led him to the Holy Scriptures, which unfortunately he soon rejected because of what he considered simplicity of style.³

Adherence to Manichaeism

With a far-reaching understanding, Augustine sought a doctrine that would justify his life at the mercy of unrestrained passions.⁴ He then adhered to the heresy of the Manicheans and gave himself to it with such fervour that he dragged along his benefactor, Romanianus, and a companion who would follow in his footsteps both in error and in conversion, Alypius.



For nine years Augustine would remain away from the Faith, leading to conduct which increased the tears and prayers of his mother who, addressing a Bishop to ask him to try to lead her son back to the right path, heard this reply: “Go your way, and God bless you, for it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish.”⁵⁵

Flight to Italy

Upon completing his studies, neither Tagaste nor even Carthage satisfied the new master, who had already gathered around him a core of disciples. Augustine decided to go and gain fame in Rome, the centre of the world. His mother suffered even more from this decision and, foreseeing the moral disaster that the move would signify, decided to accompany him. He, however, had devised other plans and, cruelly deceiving her, fled: “refusing to go back without me, it was with difficulty I persuaded her to remain that night in a place quite close to our ship, where there was an oratory in memory of the blessed Cyprian. That night I secretly left, but she was not backward in prayers and weeping.”⁵⁶

While in Rome, Augustine obtained from the prefect, Symmachus, the appointment to the chair of rhetoric in Milan, then an imperial city, moving there with his disciples. However, this time it was not Augustine who fulfilled his desires... but Providence that was drawing up the plans in answer to his mother’s tears.

The encounter with wisdom

Augustine moved to Milan already completely disillusioned with Manichaeism, which he had replaced with philosophical scepticism. However, something, or rather *someone*, made him prefer Catholic doctrine.

A holy man named Ambrose occupied the episcopal see of that city, and his wisdom flowed to the faithful through the eloquence of his words, accompanied by the beauty of the Lit-

urgy, hymns, and Psalms. St. Monica – who, in pursuit of her runaway son, had also crossed the Mediterranean – quickly became a friend of this prelate, and through the prayers and holiness of both, grace began to gain ground in that soul, as hardened as it was beloved.

Attending services in the cathedral, and especially analysing the person of St. Ambrose, Augustine sensed that he had finally found wisdom, not in an abstract and conceptual way, but transposed into life, and he even delighted in watching the Bishop work. The first step had been taken; the definitive conversion, however, would still take time in coming.

Referring to St. Ambrose, he recalls: “But verily no opportunity could I find of ascertaining what I desired from that Your so holy oracle, his breast, unless the thing might be entered into briefly. But those surgings in me required to find him at full leisure, that I might pour them out to him, but never were they able to find him so.”⁵⁷

Fascination with monastic life

If reading Plotinus, translated into Latin by Marius Victorinus, helped him in refuting Manichean errors, it was above all in the epistles of St. Paul that Augustine found truth revealed and his doctrinal difficulties vanished.

He then sought out Simplicianus, a venerable elder whom Ambrose himself considered a father.

He had had the joy of witnessing the conversion of the translator of Plotinus’ works and attending, with the entire city of Rome, his solemn profession of faith and consequent renunciation of the chair of rhetoric, facts which he narrated in detail.

Upon analysing St. Ambrose, Augustine sensed that he had found wisdom transposed to everyday life

St. Ambrose – Cathedral of Sts. Justus and Pastor, Narbonne (France); in the background, Cathedral of Milan (Italy).
On the previous page, St. Augustine, by Tomás Giner – Alma Mater Museum, Zaragoza (Spain)

Hearing these narratives, an intense desire to imitate him invaded Augustine’s soul, but his will, weakened by passions, was not yet free to do so...

On another occasion, a royal dignitary, Ponticianus, came to visit him. Seeing the Pauline letters on the rhetoric professor’s desk, he felt encouraged to discuss with him the wonders of a new way of life initiated by a certain Anthony and which had already spread throughout Europe, including Milan.

Ponticianus even recounted a singular episode: two close friends of his, after visiting one of those nascent communities, had decided to leave everything to follow them, and their fiancées, upon discovering what had happened, also embraced virginity. The courage of these young people was enough to awaken in Augustine a deep sense of shame at his own cowardice in the face of carnal passions. A great inner struggle took hold of him, for the weakness of his will clashed



with his reason and refused to obey it, just as his members did.

“A great storm broke out, bringing with it a copious torrent of tears,”⁸ which only subsided when, already half in despair, he went to the garden and opened the Bible to the following passage from the Apostle: “not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom 13:13-14). The darkness of doubt dissipated within him, and the light of certainty penetrated his heart.

Breaking immediately with his career and engagement, which had been made a few years earlier due to the influence of his mother, Augustine enrolled among the catechumens and, at the Easter Vigil of 387, began a new life through the regenerating waters of Baptism, accompanied by his faithful friend Alypius and his son Adeodatus. During his time of preparation, Augustine withdrew with his family to Cassiciacum, leading a routine of study and community life. Having become a Christian, he decided to return to Africa and live there in a manner coherent with the Faith he had embraced.

It was in the port of Ostia, waiting for the ship that would take them to their homeland, that St. Monica, feeling her mission accomplished upon seeing her son not only Catholic but even willing to become a religious, peacefully surrendered her soul to God.

A life of perfection

From the writings of the Holy Doctor, it is not difficult to glimpse the greatness of a soul that knew neither mediocrity nor half-truths. Just as, estranged from God, he had reached the extremes of passion and of heresy as a corollary, having embraced grace he



The darkness of doubt was dispelled in Augustine; the light of certainty entered his heart; and a new life began through Baptism

The Baptism of St. Augustine, by Felice Damiani (edited) – Church dedicated to him in Gubbio (Italy)

would lead his life in the apex of perfection, allowing not only his thoughts but also his way of life to be moulded by it.

The enchantment with monastic life is described in one of his first apologetic works, *De moribus Ecclesiae*, composed shortly after his Baptism, during the time he remained in Rome after his mother’s funeral.

Addressing the Catholic Church, he observes: “Yours, as is fit, are the many hospitable, the many friendly, the many compassionate, the many learned, the many chaste, the many saints, the many so ardent in their love to God, that in perfect continence and amazing indifference to this world they find happiness even in solitude.”⁹ And inveighing against his former fellow followers, against whom he writes the work, he exclaims: “Hear now, you Manicheans, the customs and notable continence of perfect Christians, who have thought it right not only to praise but also to practise the height of chastity [...] a daily increasing multitude of Christian men of absolute continence spread all over the world, especially in the East and in Egypt, as you cannot help knowing.”¹⁰ Describ-

ing the different activities of the religious, Augustine concludes by saying: “Such customs, such a life, such arrangements, such a system, I could not commend as it deserves, if I wished to commend it.”¹¹

This became his life’s mission. On arriving in Tagaste, he transformed his father’s house into a religious community, which many of his disciples joined.

“Vix monachus bonus...”

Augustine intended to embrace a life of recollection forever. However, his virtue and wisdom attracted the attention of Valerius, Bishop of Hippo, and despite his reluctance, he was ordained a priest in 391 and coadjutor bishop in 395.

A great perplexity arose: until then, monastic life had seemed incompatible with pastoral activity. The Saint, however, managed to “closely unify the life of a cleric with the life of a monk,” in the “symbiosis of study-contemplation-apostolate,”¹² perhaps adding another degree of perfection to both forms of life. “Among all the forms of ancient monasticism, the Augustinian form is the one that most explicitly emphasizes the union of the ascetic life with the ministerial priesthood and, therefore, the consequent commitment to the continuous study of sacred science. [...] The priesthood is something so great that only a good monk – so believed St. Augustine – can give us a good cleric: *vix monachus bonus facit bonum clericum*.”¹³

To this end, he organized a monastery-seminary where the most well-prepared were chosen for the priesthood.¹⁴ In a short time, several dioceses in Africa had clerics trained in this environment at their head: “Ten holy and venerable men, continent and very learned [...] sent by Blessed Augustine, at the request of several churches, some of

great standing. And they too, following the ideal of those saints, were spreading churches and founding monasteries [...] not only throughout Africa, but also beyond the sea.”¹⁵

Strict observance of the rule

He cared for these priests with such seriousness that he was greatly grieved when one of them left a will bequeathing his possessions upon his death. Saddened to see him thus neglecting the commitment to evangelical poverty he had made before God, the Bishop, then seventy-one years old, gathered his clergy and, explaining the case, stated that he would change his decision to only ordain clergy of community life, so that they would not make a vow and then be unable to fulfil it.¹⁶

This bad example served to spur them on in their commitment, and in the following sermon, Augustine would exclaim with even greater vehemence: “Just as I affirmed that I would not deprive of the status of clergy anyone who wished to remain apart and live off their own possessions, so I affirm now that, although with God’s help it has pleased them to live in common, whoever lives in hypocrisy and is found possessing something of their own, I will not allow them to bequeath it in their will, but I will erase them from the list of the clergy. Let them appeal against

me in a hundred councils, let them sail against me wherever they wish, let them be wherever they can be, the Lord will help me so that they cannot be of the clergy where I am the Bishop.”¹⁷

The Bishop of Hippo also dedicated himself to the formation of a feminine community, which was led by his own sister. It was in writing to them in the year 423 that his rule has reached us, preceded by wise words of admonition against the spirit of revolt.¹⁸

Defining the principles of monastic life – such as poverty, prayer, fasting, obedience, and chastity – the rule contains this wise advice that greatly pleased the founder of the Heralds, Msgr. João: “When you go out, walk together; when you return, stay together. In your conduct, in your bearing, throughout all your movements, let nothing in you offend the gaze of anyone, but let everything be in accordance with religious holiness.”¹⁹

In this observance of the rule, he lived thirty-five years as Bishop-Abbot, giving sermons, and holding numerous controversies and debates against the Donatist and Pelagian heretics; participating in several councils; writing numerous works, totalling ninety-six titles, all of which he revised before his death.

The Vandals had been besieging Hippo for three months when the Holy Bishop gave his soul to God in the year 430. The barbarians destroyed everything in Roman Africa, but the example of St. Augustine’s life, his writings and his rule have endured throughout the centuries, undergoing a revival in the 14th century and reaching our days; they indicate to the clergy and people of all times an ideal of perfection, of dedication, of holiness, and show the true depth of his wisdom. ✠



Gustavo Kraji

A soul that knew neither mediocrity nor half-truths, having embraced grace, shaped her way of life in accordance with it

St. Augustine – Museum of Religious Art, Cuzco (Peru)

¹ ST. AUGUSTINE. Confessions. L.II, c.3, n.5. The direct quotations from the work, reproduced in this article, were taken from: *Confissões*. 17.ed. São Paulo: Paulus, 2004.

² Ibid., c.1-2.

³ Cf. ibid., L.III, c.4; c.5, n.9.

⁴ Cf. GOBRY, Ivan. *Saint Augustin*. Paris: Le Grand Livre du Mois, 2004, p.30.

⁵ ST. AUGUSTINE, op. cit., L.III, c.12, n.21.

⁶ Ibid., L.V, c.8, n.15.

⁷ Ibid., L.VI, c.3, n.4.

⁸ Ibid., c.12, n.28.

⁹ Idem. *De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*. L.I, c.30, n.64.

¹⁰ Ibid., c.31, n.65.

¹¹ Ibid., n.68.

¹² ÁLVAREZ GÓMEZ, CMF, Jesús. *Historia de la vida religiosa*. Madrid: Instituto Teológico de Vida Religiosa, [s.d.], v.I, p.340.

¹³ TURBESSI apud GUTIÉRREZ, OSA, David. *Los agustinos en la Edad Media*. Roma: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum S. Augustini, 1980, p.17-18.

¹⁴ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *Epistola LX*.

¹⁵ POSSIDIO. *Vita Augustini*, c.XI. In: ST. AUGUSTINE. *Obras Completas*. 4.ed. Madrid: BAC, 1969, v.I, p.318.

¹⁶ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE. *Sermo CCCLV*.

¹⁷ Idem. *Sermo CCCLVI*.

¹⁸ Cf. idem. *Epistola CCXI*.

¹⁹ GOBRY, op. cit., p.158.



Man's War, God's rest

This is the cruel reality we face on so many occasions: our apparent failures in the battles of the spiritual life. But is there any way we can profit from them?

✠ Dcn. Gabriel Borges Bonfim Silva, EP



Do not be alarmed, dear reader, by the title of this article. Do not be alarmed, because we do not intend to recall here the conflicts of various kinds that afflict our world today... Do not be alarmed, because we will neither advocate for war

nor criticize it. Do not be alarmed: we will only undertake the task of reminding you that every man is born a warrior. Yes, a warrior; a truth acknowledged since patriarchal times: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job 7:1).

From the moment man sees the light and utters his first whimper, his incipient war cry, until the last groan of the final struggle – for *agony* etymologically signifies *combat*, – he is placed in a huge and complex battlefield. However, unlike the hostilities to which we are accustomed, in the struggle of life there are no borders that guarantee us security and protection, no peace treaties, no truces, no rearguard, no reservists. Above all, final victory and definitive peace will never be achieved... on this earth.

In fact, even if a man deserts and leaves the battle, the battle will not abandon him; even if he has decided to lead a righteous life – in the practice of the Commandments of God's Law and virtue, – the difficulties will not cease, his passions will cry out, his fears will accompany him; and if he climbs the peaks of holiness, the struggle will intensify, because it is in the mountains that lightning strikes.

The combat of the spiritual life – for it is of this warfare that we are speaking – ends only with bodily death.



Mujtaba Hassan (CC by-sa 4.0)

As a person progresses in the spiritual life, the struggle will not abandon him; rather, it will intensify, for it is on the mountains that lightning strikes...

Storm over the White Mountains – Appalachian Mountains (New Hampshire); above, Cavalry Charge, by Josep Cusachs

What to do about stumbling blocks?

But, if it is true that one cannot achieve a definitive victory before Heaven, it is more than proven that defeat is always at the door; and it often even knocks it down...

This is the cruel reality we face on so many occasions: failure.

It would be useless, however, to discuss our failures, since they are not new to anyone, and the extensive experience that the years accumulate is enough for us to be quite convinced of this.

What, however, becomes truly necessary is to know how to avoid them or to profit by them.

A classic example from spirituality can put us on the path toward a successful counterattack. Let us reflect on it.

The great problem for those who are standing is the risk of falling (cf. 1 Cor 10:12), especially if they are walking on rocky terrain. However, the traveller who stumbles and loses his balance is forced to take a series of quicker steps in order to regain stability and not succumb. The result: he covers more ground in less time.

Something similar occurs in our spiritual life. It consists of a long journey towards Heaven, whose route is not only through a valley of tears, but also along a path with “stumbling blocks.” However, thanks to such hindrances, we end up accelerating our pace and making greater progress: thus, he who slips into slander, if he runs to avoid falling, will begin to praise others; the person who loses patience will devise tactics for meekness so as not to relapse... In a cer-

tain way, these impediments, when not wasted, give us a strengthening similar to a fractured bone which, after healing, becomes even more solid in the injured area.

If this solidification of the soul were not enough, setbacks further ground the spiritual life. Humility is the foun-

dation of all virtues, and the foundation of humility is humiliation; however, these are better when we do not choose them, so “it is good for our humility for us to be wounded in this spiritual warfare.”¹ Aware of our nothingness, we have all the conditions to turn to Him who is All and can do all things.

Thus, in addition to urging us on and protecting us against future falls, these “stones” are a continuous reminder of two realities that man likes to forget: firstly, that we are weak and can achieve nothing alone... except a fall: “apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5); secondly, everything is possible for us as long as we are sustained by grace: “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

Let us give thanks to God, then, for difficulties and obstacles!

Let the dead arise!

That stumbling in the spiritual life can be useful seems to have become clear. But we do not always manage to regain our balance and remain standing. At such moments, is there any solution?

The answer is as simple as it is obvious: get up.

“But if we do fall,” advises St. Francis de Sales, “[...] rise up immediately as if you had not fallen. [...] Weakness is not a great evil, and there is great value in raising oneself little by little.”² And the illustrious Doctor of the Church does not leave out those who have the misfortune not only to fall, but even to die spiritually by offending God with mortal sin: “Provided there is no desire to remain or to fall asleep in evil, falls into mortal sin do not impede the progress that has been



**Aware of our nothingness, we have all the
conditions to turn to the Him who is All
and can do all things**

“Christ and the woman taken in adultery”, by Nicolas
Colombel – Rouen Museum of Fine Arts (France)

*We do not always
manage to regain our
balance and remain
standing. At such
moments, is there
a solution? The
solution is simple
and obvious...*

made through devotion. [...] one recovers it with the first repentance for this sin.”³

“Provided there is no desire to remain or to fall asleep...” So, has someone who remains an enemy of God for a long time lost the opportunity to turn back? Is there a remedy for prolonged death? In spiritual medicine – more effective than that of the body – yes: even for the dead there is a cure! In fact, although mortal sins are all the more deleterious to the soul the longer it remains in this lamentable state, forgiveness will not for that reason be denied to those who kneel in the confessional with contrition.

Worse than sin

Therefore, “if we do fall, we should try to be prepared to do everything before losing enthusiasm, hope, and

resolve.”⁴ Otherwise, the stab wound to the Sacred Heart of Jesus will be even deeper, as He Himself explained to the Spanish mystic Sister Josefa Menéndez: “It is not sin that wounds My Heart most. What breaks it is that souls do not want to take refuge in Me after they have committed it.”⁵

“If we fall, let us lose anything but than the courage to fight”, for there is something in the world worse than sin, and its name is despondency

In other words, there is something in the world worse than sin, and its name is discouragement.

By knocking us down through sin, the devil seeks above all to drag us into the abyss of despair. He knows well that “our salvation has two mortal enemies: presumption while innocent, and despair after a fall. The second is the more terrible.”⁶ Millennia of continuous practice have taught him that if he takes away our impetus and courage, he wins the battle. Indeed, “in this war we are always victorious, provided that we are willing to fight.”⁷

We are what was missing in Paradise

We have already briefly analysed the best solutions for the copious setbacks in our daily struggle: upon stumbling, run; upon falling, get up; in any case, do not despair!

But would it not be simpler to uproot the problem? Would it not be better if there were no such immense “stumbling block factory” as are the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh?

Could we not have the life that was lived in Paradise before the accursed Serpent appeared?

Oh, what a delightful life man had before sin!... He was served by plants and beasts, strolled through ever-fragrant gardens, harvested fruits that were more delicious each day, next to crystalline lakes... In Paradise there was everything!

Everything? “Paradise had everything, except a hero,”⁸ stated Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. Therefore, the expulsion from Eden was, more than a punishment, the promotion of man to the state of warrior, so that he could demonstrate to God a selfless love, which is only revealed in sufferings and in the storm.

In this sense, St. Alphonsus Liguori teaches that “the soul, being idle, without temptations and without struggles, is in danger of being lost.”⁹ In seri-



Gustavo Kralj

“Paradise had everything except a hero,” said Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. Following his expulsion from Eden, man was elevated to the status of a warrior

The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise – Gloucester Cathedral (England)

ous danger, to be precise, since it is threatened with clinging to this earth and forgetting the practice of the most important – and forgotten – of the commandments: “you shall love the Lord your God with all your soul” (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37).

It is a good thing that God is God and we are not in His place. Because, if we were the Creator, we would certainly have idealized a different world, in which there would be no possibility of error, suffering would be abolished, and sin would find no dwelling place: a world, therefore, that would be incomplete.

Why incomplete?

“And God rested”

To answer this question, let us go back to the beautiful account of creation contained in the Book of Genesis. For six days, myriads and myriads of wonders with which Divine Omnipotence deigned to adorn the universe came into being. At the end of this period, “God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gn 1:31). Only then did He rest.

St. Ambrose, commenting on this sublime passage, clarifies the reason why such rest occurred only on the seventh day: God “created the heavens and I do not read that He rested; He created the earth and I do not read that He rested; He created the sun, the moon, and the stars and I do not even



**Do we have any reason to lose heart?
“However wretched we may be, we are not
as wretched as God is merciful,” asserted
St. Francis de Sales**

The return of the prodigal son - St. John the Baptist Cathedral, Charleston (North Carolina)

read then that He rested; but I read that He created man and that at that moment He rested, having a being whose sins He could forgive.”¹⁰ The Lord rests by forgiving.

The created universe would not be complete if the Almighty did not have the opportunity to reflect all His attributes in it, especially His mercy and forgiveness, in which His power shines supremely, since “God’s omnipotence

is particularly shown in sparing and having mercy.”¹¹ Now, these most ineffable divine attributes would not be evident if man were not an erring being, and capable of asking for forgiveness. Therefore, temptations and their consequences – which we would have relentlessly eradicated from “our paradise” – are the indispensable shadows that serves as an aesthetic contrast in the work of art of creation: they make the innocence of the faithful soul even brighter and enhance the radiance of the one that has been forgiven.

So, what reasons could lead us to distrust divine mercy and become discouraged?

Our stumbling? But if they bring us closer to Heaven at a faster pace, why should we be saddened?

Sin? But if God did not hesitate to mould humanity with the possibility of sinning, will He waver at the moment of forgiveness, since to grant it He lived among us and died for us?

Discouragement itself? If our Mother is the very Mother of God, is it possible to lose the courage to return to the Father’s house? Is it possible to be doubtful of being forgiven?

Neither difficulties, nor falls, nor sins will make us distrust and lose heart, “for however miserable one may be, God is merciful toward those who truly want to love Him and who have placed all their hope in Him.”¹² ✠

¹ ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, apud TISSOT, Joseph. *How to Profit from Your Faults*. 2nd printing. New York: Scepter Publishers, Inc., 2004, pg. 40.

² Ibid., p.36.

³ Ibid., p.41.

⁴ Ibid., p.40.

⁵ MENÉNDEZ, RSCJ, Josefa. *Apelo ao amor*. Belo Horizonte: Divina Misericórdia, 2018, p.322.

⁶ ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, apud TISSOT, op. cit., p.32.

⁷ ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, op. cit., p.40.

⁸ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. *Conference*. São Paulo, 21/9/1985.

⁹ ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA LIGUORI. *A prática do amor a Jesus Cristo*. São Paulo: Cultor de Livros, 2021, p.185.

¹⁰ ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN. *Los seis días de la creación*.

Hexamerón. Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2011, p.338.

¹¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. I, q.25, a.3, ad 3.

¹² ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, op. cit., p.42.

A Maternal Warning

Rue du Bac, La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima...and Cimbres? Yes, the Blessed Virgin deigned to warn her children, in the Brazilian hinterland as well, about the dangers threatening them and show them the paths to salvation.

✧ Jean Pedro Antunes Galdino



In Brazil in 1936, the country was “experiencing the Revolution of 1930 and the threat of communism,” as the current Bishop of Pesqueira (Pernambuco), Dom José Luiz Ferreira Salles, CSsR, briefly describes. At that time, dangerous bandits roamed the hinterlands of Pernambuco state heading toward Paraíba. Wherever they passed, they left a trail of the most disgraceful crimes and atrocities. The village of Cimbres, located in the Ororubá mountains and belonging to the same Diocese of Pesqueira, was the setting for some of these events. It is in this region, hidden in the remote reaches of the Brazilian Northeast, that our story begins...

A “Mariophany” in Brazilian lands

In this area, there was a property called the Guarda. During that fateful time, Mr. Arthur Teixeira de Carvalho, who resided there, used to seek shelter among the large boulders to pray outdoors with his wife, Auta, and all their children, next to a picture of the Blessed Virgin beautifully adorned with flowers, beseeching her maternal protection. In early June 1936, the outlaws returned to that land, but the family was left unharmed.

On the morning of August 6, when the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord was being celebrated through-

out the world, Auta asked her thirteen-year-old daughter, Maria da Luz, to go and pick fruit, accompanied by Maria da Conceição, a sixteen-year-old friend who was staying with the family. Along the way, the girls wondered what they would do if Chief Lampião’s bandits appeared again. Maria da Luz did not hesitate to affirm that she would do the same as before: she would pray to the good Mother of Heaven, certain that She would defend them. Having

said this, she raised her eyes to the rock, drawn by a light of incomparable brightness and beauty.

“It seems that She is there, to protect us now!” – exclaimed the younger girl to her companion, who also saw the luminous figure.

What was it? A new transfiguration, no longer on Mount Tabor, but on the cliffs of Cimbres. Yes, it was a “Mariophany” in Brazilian lands! The Morning Star had descended from Heaven and, in contact with those young girls, made their souls shine: they formed the “Three Marys,”² no longer Mary Magdalene or Mary Cleophas, as the Gospels narrate, but rather “Mary of Light” and “Mary of the Conception”³; the third remained the same, Mary of Nazareth, the Blessed Virgin, who appeared there.

The first to discover what had happened was Auta, who extracted the information from the visionaries and, after an initial moment of incredulity, ended up believing the account. The same, however, cannot be said of the rest of the family, who argued heatedly with the girls to dissuade them from divulging the apparition. The news soon spread throughout the region, however, as is often the case, and attempts to silence the events were in vain.

Concerned, Arthur sought the guidance of the local Bishop, Most Rev. Adalberto Accioli, who entrusted his



On their way to gather fruit in the countryside, the two girls witnessed a “Mariophany” on Brazilian soil

Maria da Conceição and Maria da Luz;
above, Our Lady of Graces

secretary, the German priest Fr. Joseph Kehrle, with investigating the case, a task he carried out with zeal and piety. The *ad hoc* investigator Fr. Joseph, along with Friar Estevam Roettger, OFM, later gave a “favourable opinion on the events and attested to their veracity.”⁴

A questioning in German

After conversing at length with Maria da Luz’s father, and questioning the girl herself about what had happened in Cimbres, Fr. Joseph gave Arthur some guidelines and left him a few written questions that the young girl should ask the “Saint,” as they called her. When asked about her identity, Our Lady replied: “I am Grace.” The apparitions continued throughout the month of August.

Fr. Joseph decided to verify the information personally. Upon arriving at the site of the apparitions on August 20, he told Arthur to go a little further away with Maria da Conceição, while he stayed there with the other girl, so that the distance would only allow them to see, but not to hear each other.

The German priest then asked the girl what she saw. She described the apparition as similar to the image of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, but with a blue mantle and a cream-white dress, in addition to having a sash. In her left arm, she held a Child, who, in turn, had his little arm around her neck. Both wore beautiful crowns.

The priest signalled to Arthur that the girls should switch positions. While with Maria da Conceição, he pointed to a different spot and stated that her friend had seen the “Image” there – another name they used to refer to Our Lady. The girl replied, almost crying, that she didn’t see her there, but right in the middle of the rock; in fact, the information coincided. When questioned about the details of the apparition, the young girl described it exactly as her friend had!

At one point, Fr. Joseph asked the father and daughter to come closer and began to ask several questions, such as whether he could speak to Our Lady in

a foreign language, to which the Virgin replied affirmatively. He then began to question her in German, while the girls relayed the answer in Portuguese. Needless to say, Goethe’s language was completely unknown to them; however, all the answers were logical and coherent:

“Is the Image a soul or is it Our Lady?” *“I am the Mother of Heaven”*.

“Are you *Mater Divinæ Gratiae*?” *“Yes”*.

“What is the name of the Child you hold in your arms?” *“Jesus”*.



**The investigator questioned
Our Lady in German, while the girls
transmitted her replies in Portuguese**

Fr. José Kehrle

“Why are you here?” *“Jesus sent Me here”*.

“For what purpose?” *“To say: serious times are coming!”*

Consistently using this unusual system, the investigator discovered that Our Lady had appeared to warn the nation about Communism, which would enter Brazil if penance was not done. The consequences would be similar to those of the Spanish Civil War, which began that same year. Much blood would be shed, but the Church would not be defeated! Our Lady asked that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to her be spread. She wanted the apparitions to be publicized and for preachers to speak of this matter to the

sheep of Christ’s flock in the whole country. Finally, She communicated that She wished to be invoked there as Our Lady of Graces.

The priest made it clear to the Blessed Virgin Mary that the authorities would not like that message, nor would they heed it. The Virgin Mary did not reply... In fact, there was not only scepticism regarding the Guarda case, but also a terrible attempt to silence it, including the use of police forces against those involved. Maria da Luz’s father was even arrested.

Proof of a loving Mother’s zeal

To further confirm the heavenly message, Our Lady caused a miraculous spring to gush forth, in the very first days of the apparitions in Cimbres, just below the rock where She was seen. To this day, water with healing properties flows from the rock, as promised by the Mother of Heaven.

It is curious that the Virgin Mary wished to appear in the Land of the Holy Cross⁵, on an obscure rock, to warn of the same thing She had already announced several times in other apparitions, such as in Fatima, for example.

Brazil was born late to the light of Christian Civilization; despite five centuries of existence, it is still a child compared to the great European nations that preceded it in the Faith, lands which shine with the glories of a past full of heroism. However, is it not true that children need special attention from their Mother?

Cimbres: an isolated case?

In fact, there have been many examples of this maternal care. In the first half of the 20th century, there were reports of several “Mariophanies” on Brazilian soil, alluding or relating to Cimbres.

In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in a small village near the city of Passo Fundo called Leitão, in 1944 there were more than a dozen apparitions of Our Lady of the Rosary to a twen-

ty-year-old peasant girl. The Blessed Virgin Mary repeated to her the message of Fatima about her displeasure with immoral fashions and, as at the Guarda, foretold the punishment that was about to befall Brazil if the people did not pray and do penance. Even more impressive was the answer given by the Virgin of the Rosary to the question about whether She would leave a spring there: “When I appeared in Pernambuco I left a spring in the rock there, but since I was not well received, I left that place!” It seems unlikely that the humble young girl from Rio Grande do Sul knew about the miraculous spring in Cimbres; not even the priest who questioned her, who happened to be from Pesqueira, knew this detail!⁶

Near the Guarda site, in Lagadiço, apparitions again occurred in 1937 to four children, at a place now known as the Mount of Our Lady, with messages identical to those recorded by Fr. Kehrle and to those from Rio Grande do Sul. One of the visionaries, José, twelve years of age, was also at the Guarda site on a pilgrimage with his mother, and said he saw Our Lady at the same time as the two girls, while Maria da Luz was in Lagadiço and saw the Blessed Virgin there. On this occasion, the kind Mother confirmed her manifestation in both places and said with great affection:

“Do you know why I spoke so clearly here in this land? It is because I find very little faith in my people and because I am seeking the conversion



The greatest proof of the authenticity of the apparitions lies in the “*sensus fidei*” of each devotee of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mass at the site of the apparitions in Cimbres (Brazil)

of all sinners and the salvation of all my dear Brazilian people!”

How aptly these same words could be applied to all nations of the earth! How many countries have not been graced with discreet, yet profound, apparitions, such as those of Cimbres? On the other hand, how diminished faith is among men... Not only Brazil, but all of humanity needs conversion.

The greatest proof of authenticity

A few years later, Maria da Luz became a nun at the Institute of the Religious of Christian Instruction in Recife, taking the name Sister Adélia. Thanks to the zeal of these sisters, all of Fr. Joseph Kehrle’s investigative documentation on the apparitions was preserved and, later, organized with commendable diligence and published by the researcher Ana Lígia Lira.⁷

In 2021, Bishop José Salles issued a judgment on the events at Cimbres. First of all, he guarantees “finding, after careful examination of the existing documentation, that the messages related to the events of Guarda Village are in accordance with the Christian Faith. From the first investigation, contemporary to the events, and meticulously documented, it is found that the content of the messages does not contradict the truths contained in the Holy Scriptures and in the doctrine of the Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic Church.”⁸

Furthermore, the local Bishop testifies to accounts of graces received and miracles, and a notable increase in the devotion of the faithful to the Mother of God, as well as the proven righteousness of life of both visionaries. Sister Adélia, who died in 2013, was declared a Servant of God and is currently in the process of beatification.

However, the choice of topic for this article did not arise from reading about the apparitions in Cimbres. The author of these lines had the opportunity to experience the graces flowing forth in this place when he passed through Pernambuco as a missionary and heard the story from the lips of the inhabitants of the region themselves. More than any historical or investigative documents, the greatest attestation of the authenticity of these manifestations in the northeastern hinterland lies above all in the *sensus fidei* – the sense of faith – of each devotee of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who experiences her maternal affection there. ✚

¹ SALLES, CSsR, José Luiz Ferreira. *Segunda Carta Pastoral. A Diocese de Pesqueira e as presumíveis aparições de Nossa Senhora da Graça*. Pesqueira: [s.n.], 2021, p.28.

² An asterism of three stars in the constellation of Orion

known in English as “Orion’s Belt”. In Portuguese it is named for the “three Mary’s” present at the Crucifixion.

³ Translation of the girls’ names: Maria da Luz and Maria da Conceição, respectively.

⁴ Ibid., p.8-9.

⁵ The name given to Brazil upon discovery by Portuguese explorers.

⁶ The two visionaries of Cimbres and Fr. Joseph Kehrle had to remain silent about what happened for almost fifty years. It was during this period that

the apparitions occurred in Rio Grande do Sul.

⁷ LIRA, Ana Lígia. *O diário do silêncio. O alerta da Virgem Maria contra o comunismo no Brasil*. 4.ed. Campinas: Ecclesiae, 2018.

⁸ SALLES, op. cit., p.37.

...how the custom of using candles for Mass originated?

In the year 64, the first great persecution against Christians broke out. Anyone who professed faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ could be thrown to the wild beasts in arenas, burned alive in imperial gardens, murdered in the streets, or crucified for the amusement of the populace.

The Church then took refuge in the bowels of the earth, in catacombs dug for corpses and for everything that had to be hidden from the light of day. But, after all, these were the only relatively safe places where the faithful could bury martyrs and gather to pray. In these dark underground chambers, Catholics attended the renewal of the Holy Sacrifice illuminated by oil lamps and candles.

The illumination used to be placed on the ground, at the foot of the altar, this liturgical practice probably extending throughout the High Middle Ages, when, around the first half of the 11th century, candelabras began to be placed on the sacred table itself. To this day, it is prescribed that at least two candles illuminate the altar during Mass, and this can increase to seven if the diocesan bishop is the celebrant (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 117).

In addition to symbolizing Christ, Light of the world, and the fire of charity that He kindles in us by His grace, the flames recall that the Holy Church dawned underground, among the bodies of the martyrs and the fervent faith of persecuted Catholics. ✠



Leandro Souza

Altar of the Oratory of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Juiz de Fora (Brazil)

...that, even before being discovered, Brazil was already dedicated to Mary?

The year was 1494. The Treaty of Tordesillas divided the globe – both discovered and yet to be discovered – into two parts, ensuring Portugal and Spain certain areas of exploration and initiating not only the conquest but also the evangelization of the New World.

In November 1499, the experienced navigator Vicente Yáñez Pinzón – who, years before, had commanded the caravel *Niña* in Columbus' first expedition in 1492 – set sail from Spain in command of a fleet of four ships. The

audacious crossing southward reached South America for the first time.

After facing a terrible storm, on January 26, 1500, Pinzón landed at a point on the northeastern coast of Brazil – historians identify it as Cabo de Santo Agostinho, in Pernambuco, or Ponta do Mucuripe, in Ceará – which he named *Holy Mary of Consolation*. Whichever the location, aware that these were lands outside the Spanish domain in the division of Tordesillas, the fleet headed north, passing through the estuary of the Amazon River – which Yáñez

named *Holy Mary of the Fresh Water Sea* – until reaching the extremities of the Brazilian coast, near the mouth of the Oiapoque River. Later, the expedition departed for the Caribbean.

Although official historiography reserves the title of discoverer of Brazil for Pedro Álvares Cabral, whose armada landed on the coast of Bahia on April 22, 1500, Pinzón's feat remains a fascinating chapter of history. It stands to illustrate how the country has always been under the maternal gaze of Mary Most Holy. ✠

Sunrise in the Amazon River delta

Photos: Lúcio Alves



Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) – The largest warship in Latin America, the *Atlântico*, was consecrated, together with her crew, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on May 28, during a Holy Mass celebrated aboard the vessel, while anchored at the Navy Arsenal in Rio de Janeiro.

Photos: Renata Cruz



São Carlos (Brazil) – On May 30 and 31, a blessed Marian mission was held at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish. In addition to the visit of the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to parishioners' homes, there was a candlelight procession through the city streets and a Eucharistic Celebration.

Photos: Delvíd Lima



Bragança Paulista (Brazil) – Heralds of the Gospel clergy and cooperators visited the sick at St. Francis University Hospital on June 19, administering the Sacraments and blessings of the Holy Church to them, and allowing them to feel the comfort of the maternal presence of the Blessed Virgin.



In Praise of the Eucharistic Jesus

Splendid Masses and crowded processions marked the Solemnity of Corpus Christi in places where the Heralds of the Gospel are active. The photos highlight ceremonies held in Brazil, at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Cotia (SP); at the Parish of Our Lady of Fátima, in Franco da Rocha (SP); and in the Heralds' oratories in the cities of Maringá (PR) and São Carlos (SP); in Paraguay, at Asuncion

Cathedral, with the presence of the Metropolitan Archbishop, Cardinal Adalberto Martínez Flores, and in the Basilica of Our Lady of Miracles in Caacupé, with the presence of Diocesan Bishop Jorge Valenzuela Ríos, and in the Parish of St. Isidore the Farmer in Limpio, a parish recently entrusted to the Heralds of Paraguay; and in Peru, at the Air Force Officer School, Las Palmas Air Base of Lima.

Maria Fernanda Aguiar



Maringá (Brazil)



Cotia (Brazil)

Emerson Júnior

Francisco Espinola



Caacupé (Paraguay)



Limpio (Paraguay)

Fátima Paniagua



Asuncion (Paraguay)

José Carlos Centurión

David Ayusso



Franco da Rocha (Brazil)



São Carlos (Brazil)

Sérgio Mantim



Lima (Peru)

Jano Aracena



Alvaro Sánchez



1



2

Preeham D'Silva



3

Alvaro Sánchez

Paraguay – To the music provided by the Paraguayan Heralds of the Gospel, the ceremony marking the start of construction of the monument to the country's Patroness, Our Lady of the Assumption, took place in the Paraguayan capital. The event was attended by the Metropolitan Archbishop, Cardinal Adalberto Martínez Flores, the Apostolic Nuncio to Paraguay, Archbishop Vincenzo Turturro, the President of the Republic, Santiago Peña Palacios, along with members of the presidential cabinet (photo 1). In May, members of the Heralds of the Gospel enlivened the celebrations for the Patrons of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary Parish (photo 2) and of Holy Spirit Parish (photo 3) in Asuncion.

Roberto Salas



1



2



3

Photos Mariana Viccari

Guatemala – On May 27, another benefit dinner was held to support the construction of the Heralds' oratory in San José Pinula, which was attended by Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, Apostolic Nuncio to the country (photo 1). In the same month, the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary visited St. Mary of Montesclaros School (photo 2) and Unicar Hospital (photo 3), both in Guatemala City.

Eduardo Corpeño



1



2



3

Pablo Verdugo

Ecuador – During the month of May, Our Lady of Fatima bestowed her blessings upon the Archdiocesan Altar Servers Rally (photo 1) and the Jacarandá Educative Centre (photo 2) in Guayaquil. During the same period, thirteen children received their First Communion at the St. Mary of the Plains Church in Cuenca (photo 3).



1



2

Mateo Pelaez



3



4



5

Hugo Alves

Photos: João Lucas Guimarães

Spain – The Heralds of the Gospel performed several musical presentations in Spain. The concerts took place at the Royal Basilica of St. Francis the Great (photo 1), at the Church of St. Firmin of the Navarrese (photo 2), and at the Collegiate Church of St. Isidore, during the ceremony of the first Saturday of the month (photo 3), in Madrid; as well as in the municipality of Cuarte de Huerva, Province of Zaragoza (photo 4). While in the Spanish capital, the Heralds were able to greet Pope Leo XIV on his apostolic journey (photo 5).



1



2



3

Alain Patrick

Rogério Baldasso

Antonio Rossini

Italy – On May 27, the Heralds were entrusted with the prayer vigil and Liturgy for the novena to the Madonna of the Letter, Patroness of Messina (photo 1). In the same month, there was a Marian mission at St. Nicholas Parish in Squillace Lido (photo 2), and in Venice, on the occasion of the visit of St. Bernadette Soubirous' relics to the Church of San Salvatore, a procession was held in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes, with the presence of Bishop Edoardo Aldo Cerrato, CO, Emeritus of Ivrea (photo 3).



Sergio Holmann

Cid Campeador - Burgos (Spain)

Since the dawn of civilization, there has been a close link between the morality of civilizations and their legends. Which role models are upheld in our society as a reference point for future generations?

True Heroes



✠ Santiago Vieto Rodríguez

In those distant times when “the philosophy of the Gospel governed the states,”¹ a supreme ideal arose, shrouded in the splendours of the legendary and embodied in men and women who, with virtues and epics, wrote some of the most beautiful pages of history. Blessed were those days when children grew up enchanted by marvellous tales of warriors who set off for distant lands, willing to sacrifice their lives in defence of the weakest, even fighting terrible dragons.²

For the modern mentality, extremely materialistic, *legendary* would be synonymous with *false*. Similarly, due to the increasing inability to understand symbolic language, today the word *fantasy* is usually associated with a confused conglomeration of images and plots, in a context that is often Gnostic, lascivious, egocentric, and disconnected from reality.

However, it is necessary to consider that the ancients lived immersed in an intrinsically religious environment, full of symbols that, according to Dr. Plinio’s commentary,³ are all the more artistic the more they express the essence of reality, while distancing themselves from its appearances.

It was a world in which poetry⁴ played a much more central role than one might imagine and, as a result of the contemplation of higher spheres, developed into the most varied artistic expressions, which, within the realm of language, formed myths and legends. These were true parables directly linked to both spiritual and materi-

al realities – in a historical, moral, or purely metaphysical sense – interpretable from different perspectives and with diverse applications, including practical ones,⁵ in some cases serving as a vehicle to recall the springtime of childhood innocence.

Leaving behind the shadows of paganism, it fell to the bards – epic poets of yesteryear – to enrich the imagination of nascent Christendom, spreading the light of sublime figures, such as Charlemagne and his twelve peers. And the Holy Church was soon raising to the honour of the altars those who – faithful to the spirit of authentic chivalry – embraced self-sacrifice to the very end.

Thus, reaching a pinnacle of sublimity, earthly crowns began to shine on the same brow as the diadem of exalted virtues, and to the vows of a religious was added that of never retreating on the battlefield.⁶ Embodying the legend and surpassing all fiction, the Orders of Chivalry were outstanding, along with figures such as St. Louis King of France, El Cid Campeador, St. Joan of Arc, and so many others!

The ideal of true heroism materialized in a Code of Chivalry that, based on the Catholic Faith, assumed as its supreme objective the duty to fight for the glory of God. Consequently, from the sacred spirit that emanated from it arose ceremonies of unprecedented artistic refinement, permeating all social strata and reverberating throughout the following centuries in all those who claimed a title of nobility.⁷



King St. Louis, Cathedral dedicated to him in Blois (France); below, at right, "Christ in Majesty," by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini - Alte Pinakothek, Munich (Germany)

But... as the first winds of Humanism blew, the desire to fight for the Holy Church and the common good was tainted by increasingly selfish romantic aims, leading chivalry to a sad decline.

Despite this, until recently, a *knight* was defined as someone who – in a

vague reminiscence of its true origin – combined strength with gentleness, displaying a cordial and refined manner, befitting a man of faith.

* * *

From the most remote Antiquity, there has been a relationship of correspondence between the morality of civilizations and their legends, since these represent, sometimes in a hypertrophied way, the object of their admiration and, consequently, the most daring aspirations, fears, and tendencies of the human soul. Aware of this reality, the Roman sage Seneca stated: "Long is the path of teaching through theories; short and effective, through examples."⁸

And... what remains of these archetypes today? What models are exalted in our society as a point of reference for future generations?

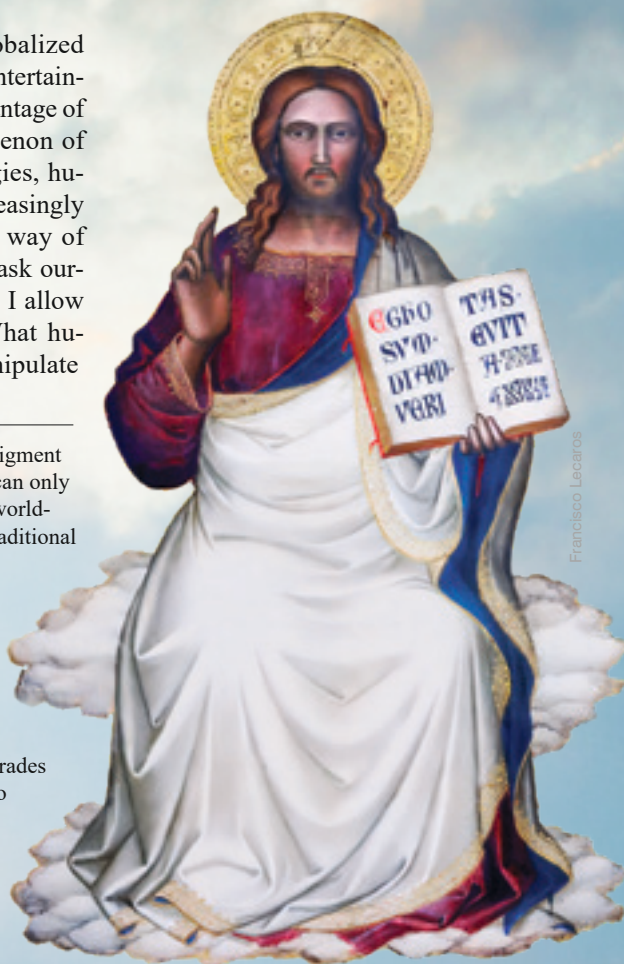
In our neo-pagan and globalized world, the mass media and entertainment industry have taken advantage of the psycho-spiritual phenomenon of imitation to promote ideologies, human types, and customs increasingly detached from the Christian way of life. It is up to each of us to ask ourselves: By what examples do I allow myself to be influenced? What human types do I allow to manipulate

my children, who are so susceptible to these impressions? Who are, in short, their heroes?

* * *

Christianus alter Christus: the absolute archetype of every human being is none other than God made Man. Along with Our Lord, those who are fully conformed to Him also figure as models.

True heroes are, therefore, those who imitated the Knight par excellence, Jesus Christ crucified, victor over darkness, death, and sin. Only the sublime and incomparable ideal of holiness can forge a society from which souls who thirst to imitate the Redeemer may arise, thus participating in the only authentic heroism: the heroism of the Cross. ✦



Francisco Lecaros

¹ LEO XIII. *Immortale Dei*, n.9.

² The dragon was considered a manifestation of evil, a concept with biblical foundations. We find examples of this in the epic poem of the Scandinavian hero *Beowulf* or in legends featuring saints, such as St. George's fight against the dragon, symbolizing the triumph of Christianity over paganism.

³ Cf. CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. Símbolos, fantasia e realidade [Symbols, Fantasy and Reality]. In: *Dr. Plínio*. São Paulo. Year IV. No. 42 (Sept., 2001), p.34.

⁴ The word poetry comes from the Latin *poiesis*, and this, in turn, from the Greek *ποίησις* (*poiesis*), which means *creation* or *production*.

⁵ See the book: BUCKLOW, Spike. *The Alchemy of Paint*. London: Marion Boyars,

2009. It explains how medieval pigment recipes, while entirely practical, can only be understood from a legendary worldview of reality, stemming from traditional thought.

⁶ As was the case with some members of ancient Orders of chivalry.

⁷ A clear example of this is Heraldry, which was not the exclusive privilege of the nobility, as its use extended to the humblest trades and was accessible to anyone who wished to avail himself of it.

⁸ SENECA, Lucius Annæus. *Ad Lucilium epistulæ morales*, VI, 5.



A Plenitude of Love that Carried Her to Heaven

Such a fullness of glory illuminated her face that one could scarcely distinguish her countenance from the light of God. Her Heart expanded with love to such a degree that her body could not withstand it... An ecstasy carried her into eternity, and She fell asleep in the Lord. [...]

For Mary Immaculate, the transition from the state of suffering to the glorious state did not signify a painful rupture in her being, as it does for ordinary men.

From her birth, She had enjoyed constant and intense contact with the angelic spirits,

and her communion, even more pronounced, with her Son, the Incarnate Word, never ceased, even after the Ascension.

As the years passed, new realms were opened to her, and graces and gifts shone forth in her soul, for her knowledge of and love for God, though always complete, were capable of further growth. At a certain moment, faith gave way to vision, and She ascended to Heaven, replete with virtues and glory; in short, replete with the Most Holy Trinity.

Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP