



HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL

Nº 228 - October 2026

Go Into All the World...

Evangelizer and Provider

Anchieta seemed to possess the divine gift of dominion over the elements. [...]

On one occasion, in the state of Bahia, when he was informed that the college had nothing to eat as the weather had become unfavorable for fishing, Anchieta summoned the net caster to his presence and, from a window, showed him a particular spot on the bay where he should put out his nets for fishing. The fisherman obeyed and was successful. In a single casting of the net, he caught so many excellent fish that there were enough not only to meet the needs of the college but also to be distributed among the needy.

Another time, while visiting an Indian village in Espírito Santo state, he learned from them that they were suffering from hunger, as the weather was unsuitable for fishing. Anchieta encouraged them and led them to a beach where the sea was raging; there was nothing to give the least indication that any fish could be caught.

“What kind of fish do you want?” Anchieta asked them.

And they, knowing from experience that they would catch nothing for food, replied in a jesting tone:

“Jackfish!”

Jackfish were the rarest and most prized fish for the indigenous people, but impossible to find at that time of year.

“Cast your nets!” Anchieta urged.

Cast them they did. And they caught so many fish, especially jackfish, that they judged themselves to be witnessing a supernatural event. They conceived an even greater reverence for the priest, who already inspired in them the respect of a shaman. They began to call him the Lord of Fishing, and they brought

him their nets, so that he would bless them when they went on distant expeditions.

TOMÁS, Joaquim. *Anchieta, o apóstolo do Brasil*.
Dois Irmãos: Minha Biblioteca Católica, 2020, p.173-174



St. Joseph Anchieta, by Benedito Calixto -
Ipiranga Museum, São Paulo; below, Barra do
Gil Beach - Itaparica (Bahia)

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



✠ Fr. Ricardo José Basso, EP

I have noticed that some people use foul language, arguing that it can be used when necessary – for example, to emphasize a point. Some even say that there is nothing in the Bible on this subject. I must admit I’m a bit confused, as my parents always forbade me to use such words. Could you help me understand this?

José C. Fernandes – Ouro Preto (MG)

The Holy Scriptures condemn foul language, as St. Paul teaches in the Epistle to the Ephesians: “Let no *evil talk* come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph 4:29-31).

Before this passage, the Apostle had already exhorted Christians to put off the old self, to renounce their past life and to be renewed inwardly, putting on the new self, created in the image of God (cf. Eph 4:22-24). Therefore, abandoning foul, coarse, and indecent language is part of the Christian’s conversion process, under pain of grieving the Paraclete.

In fact, indecent words often express angry, lustful, or vulgar thoughts, unworthy of a true disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who must distinguish himself by a clear and elevated vocabulary, thus witnessing his charity and purity, for “out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Lk 6:45). The terrible spread of bad language is a very significant symptom of the moral crisis afflicting the world. We notice more and more, in both public and private settings, the use of obscene and indecent expressions, which many even take pride in using.

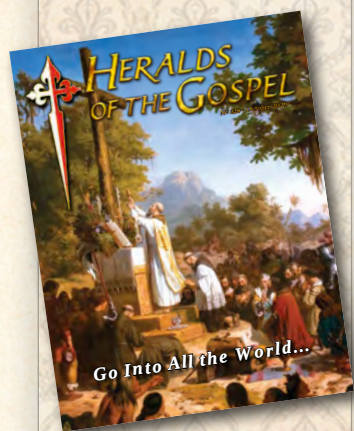
In God, being and word are one and the same reality. The Word – affirms St. John – was with God and was God

(cf. Jn 1:1). For men, however, it seems not to be so; the word sometimes differs from the being due to various circumstances, although this is not ideal. Created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1:26-27), we must seek harmony between what we are and what we express, so that something of our Creator may shine forth in us. Integrity, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, “tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech” (CCC 2338).

There is yet another reason to consider the seriousness of resorting to vulgarities in order to habitually express oneself, in moments of anger or agitation. So-called “swear words” are usually indecent, as they refer to realities related to the scope of the Sixth Commandment of the Law of God.

St. Paul also teaches in the Letter to the Ephesians: “Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting” (Eph 5:4). The vulgarity and lust present in impure words stain and disfigure the soul of the one who pronounces them and, in a certain way, also wound the dignity of the one who hears them. Oral expression reflects the interior of the heart, and at the same time moulds and influences it. Therefore, indecent language represents an attack on “God’s temple” (1 Cor 3:16) which is the human being. And this is why St. Paul censures it so severely.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that having respectful, dignified, and elevated language is an indispensable part of good Christian comportment, courtesy, and apostolate. ✠



"First Mass in Brazil", by Victor Meirelles - National Museum of Fine Arts, Rio de Janeiro

Photo: Reproduction

"TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS"

The Divine Architect created Heaven and earth as an expression of His infinite goodness. From His hands, creatures came into being in an orderly manner, with "measure and number and weight" (Wis 11:20). At the pinnacle of the universe, He fashioned man in His own image and likeness, the most perfect reflection of which is the Incarnate Word, sent into the world out of pure love (cf. Jn 3:16).

The sending of the Son has a clear purpose, as He Himself said: "For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37). Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4). In the same vein, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation" (CCC 851). Outside the truth, there is no salvation.

Upon ascending into Heaven, the Redeemer entrusted to the Apostles the mission to share in this spreading of the truth: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). For this reason, the Church extends to every corner of the globe by virtue of her very catholicity – Catholic means *universal*.

Thus, the Church is also intrinsically *missionary*, in the most radical sense of the term – *missio* means *sending*. And for what purpose is she sent? The *Catechism* answers: "The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love" (CCC 850). The mission therefore shares in the Trinitarian relations: "As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21).

At the Ascension, Jesus also promised that He would be with us until the end of time (cf. Mt 28:20). The Holy Spirit continues to be sent out to the entire world and the Gospel proclaimed "to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15), so that all things may be brought together in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10).

This means that evangelization, the ultimate goal of which is to lead humanity back to the Father, is directed towards all realities. Everything proceeds from the mutual love of the Persons of the Trinity – *exitus* – and must return to this source – *reditus*. For this reason, the apostolate must effectively reach out to peoples not only through preaching – which is, of course, essential, for "faith comes from what is heard" (Rom 10:17) – but also through the establishment of a genuine Catholic civilization, so as to permeate *the whole creation* with the Most Precious Blood of Christ.

Whilst earthly cities covet only dominion – "*dominandi libido*" (St. Augustine. *The City of God*, Preface) – the Church on her journey towards the Fatherland aspires to reflect ever more perfectly the Church Triumphant. She is immaculate and most pure (cf. Eph 5:27), like the Virgin Mary, yet she must still live here in combat – she is militant by nature – and her full victory will be consummated only at the Last Judgement.

For now, the Church spares no effort in sailing the seas, venturing into forests and crossing the skies to bring absolutely everything back to Christ: not only people, but also social life, the arts, ambiances, customs... everything. Nothing is left out, for "from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" (Rom 11:36). ✠



Mother of All Peoples

From the dawn of Redemption, the Church has dedicated herself to writing, with the letters of the Gospel, the history of all the peoples who have gathered under her mantle.

A MISSION CONTINUED THROUGH THE CENTURIES

Before He returned to His Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ addressed to His disciples the words: “Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all creation” (Mk 16:15). With these words He committed to them a duty, a momentous and a holy charge, that was not to lapse with the death of the Apostles but would bind their successors until the end of the world – as long, that is, as there remained on this earth men whom the truth might set free. [...]

The Church, faithful to that divine mandate, has never ceased to dispatch to every corner of the world, couriers and ministers of the Divine Word, to announce the eternal salvation won by Christ for the human race.

BENEDICT XV.
Maximum illud, 30/11/1919

LASTING FRUIT

The first evangelization took place above all in the region of the Mediterranean. In the course of the first millennium, missions setting out from Rome and Constantinople brought Christianity to the whole continent of Europe. At the same time, they made their way to the heart of Asia, as far as India and China.

The end of the fifteenth century marked both the discovery of America and the beginning of the evangelization of that great continent, North and

South. Simultaneously, while the sub-Saharan coasts of Africa welcomed the light of Christ, St. Francis Xavier, Patron of the Missions, reached Japan.

At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, a layman, Andrew Kim, brought Christianity to Korea. In the same period the proclamation of the Gospel reached Indochina, as well as Australia and the Islands of the Pacific. The nineteenth century witnessed vast missionary activity among the peoples of Africa. All these efforts bore fruit which has lasted up to the present day.

ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 10/11/1994

THE TRUE MOTHER OF ALL PEOPLES AND NATIONS

The Church is a Mother – *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* – a true Mother, the Mother of all nations and all peoples, no less than of each and every human being; and precisely because she is a Mother, she does not and cannot belong exclusively to this or that people, nor to one people more than another, but to all of them equally.

She is a Mother and, consequently, cannot be a stranger anywhere. She lives, or at least, by virtue of her very nature, must live amongst all peoples; and, moreover, just as a mother, together with her spouse and her children, forms a family, so the Church, by virtue of an incomparably closer union, constitutes something greater and bet-

ter than a family: the Mystical Body of Christ.

PIUS XII. *Speech*,
24/12/1945

THE CHURCH IS TRULY CATHOLIC

The Church can regard no one as excluded from its motherly embrace, no one as outside the scope of its motherly care. It has no enemies except those who wish to make themselves such. Its catholicity is no idle boast. It was not for nothing that it received its mission to foster love, unity and peace among men.

It realizes only too well the enormous difficulties of such a mission. It is well aware of the numerical disproportion between itself and the rest of the human race. It knows its own limitations, its own shortcomings and the failings of its own members. It realizes too that the acceptance of the Gospel does not depend on any apostolic endeavours of its own, nor on the existence of the right temporal conditions. Faith is a gift of God; He alone determines in the world the order and the time of salvation.

The Church does, however, realize that it is the seed, as it were, the leaven, the salt and the light of the world. Fully conscious of all that is new and remarkable in this modern age, it nevertheless holds its place in a changing world with sincere confidence, and says to men: “Here in my possession is what you seek, what you need.” Its promise is not one of earthly happiness, yet it nevertheless provides the best means



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The Church, faithful to that divine mandate, has never ceased to dispatch to every corner of the world, couriers and ministers of the Divine Word, to announce the eternal salvation won by Christ for the human race

“St. Junipero celebrates Mass at Monterey”, by León Troussset -
Museum of the Mission of St. Charles Borromeo of the Carmel River, Carmel-by-the-Sea (California)

for the attainment of earthly happiness, namely, light and grace. It then it teaches men about their transcendent destiny, and speaks to them of truth, justice, freedom, progress, concord, civilization and peace. The Church well knows the value of these things. It knows them in the light of Christ's revelation.

ST. PAUL VI.
Ecclesiam suam, 6/8/1964

THE CHURCH DOES NOT REPRESS, BUT SANCTIFIES NATIVE CUSTOMS

The Church from the beginning down to our own time has always followed this wise practice: let not the Gospel on being introduced into any new land destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just or beautiful. For the Church, when she calls people to a higher culture and a better way of life, under the inspiration of the Christian religion, does not act like one who recklessly cuts down and uproots a thriving forest. No, she grafts a good scion upon the wild stock that it may bear a crop of more delicious fruit. [...]

This is the reason why the Catholic Church has neither scorned nor rejected the pagan philosophies. Instead, after freeing them from error and all contami-

nation she has perfected and completed them by Christian revelation. So likewise the Church has graciously made her own the native art and culture which in some countries is so highly developed. She has carefully encouraged them and has brought them to a point of aesthetic perfection that of themselves they probably would never have attained. By no means has she repressed native customs and traditions but has given them a certain religious significance; she has even transformed their feast days and made them serve to commemorate the martyrs and to celebrate mysteries of the Faith.

PIUS XII.
Evangelii praecones, 2/6/1951

HOW TO FAVOUR A PEOPLE'S DEVELOPMENT?

A people's development does not derive primarily from money, material assistance or technological means, but from the formation of consciences and the gradual maturing of ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour. [...] The Church forms consciences by revealing to peoples the God whom they seek and do not yet know, the grandeur of man created in God's image and loved by Him, the equality of all men and women as God's sons and daughters, the mas-

tery of man over nature created by God and placed at man's service, and the obligation to work for the development of the whole person and of all mankind.

Through the Gospel message, the Church offers a force for liberation which promotes development precisely because it leads to conversion of heart and of ways of thinking.

ST. JOHN PAUL II.
Redemptoris missio, 7/12/1990

MAY THE WORLD RECOGNIZE IN CHRIST THE LIGHT THAT SAVES

Holy Father, make us one in Christ, rooted in His love that unites and renews. May all members of the Church be united in mission, docile to the Holy Spirit, courageous in bearing witness to the Gospel, proclaiming and daily embodying Your faithful love for all creatures. Bless all missionary men and women, support them in their efforts, and watch over them in hope! Mary, Queen of Missions, accompany our work of evangelization in every corner of the earth: make us instruments of peace, and grant that the whole world may recognize in Christ the light that saves. Amen.

LEO XIV.
Message, 25/1/2026



October 4 – 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

(Is 5:1-7; Ps 79; Phil 4:6-9; Mt 21:33-43)

Danger Comes from Within, and so Does the Solution



✠ Fr. Felipe de Azevedo Ramos, EP

*The greatest
threats
to God's
vineyard are
not external,
but come
from the
hearts of the
vinedressers
themselves*

Tuesday of Holy Week. The Saviour delivers a pointed parable to the high priests and elders of the people, in an attempt to dissuade them from their wickedness. He narrates the story of a vineyard – a symbol of the “house of Israel” (Is 5:7) and a prefigure of the Church – leased to tenants.

At first glance, the allegory seems to suggest that the greatest danger to the vineyard is the intrusion of thieves. To ward them off, the vineyard is surrounded by fences, an allusion to the powerful protection of the angelic host. Such barriers, however, are insufficient: the thieves are cunning and will stop at nothing to steal into the vineyard. It is also necessary to build a watchtower. Whence the eternal warning: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Mt 26:41), for Eve, Samson, David, and many others succumbed for lack of vigilance.

In this scenario, everything promises prosperity: the “choicest vines” (Is 5:2) are protected by fences, watchtowers, and sentinels; the land is cleared, and the winepress produces the finest wines. Now it is possible to travel abroad: the vinedressers will take care of the harvest, and all will go well...

But no. The owner – God – delegates the responsibility for the vineyard to a few chosen ones. These, however, seize it and mistreat his emissaries. Finally, as a last resort, this head of the family sends his own

son to collect the fruits. What follows is shocking: the vinedressers receive him with unparalleled brutality, beating him to death, foreshadowing the Redemptive Passion that was to unfold a few days later.

Thus, the Divine Master suggests that the main threat to His vineyard does not come from external enemies, but from internal ones, especially those to whom responsibilities have been entrusted. It is not the Diocletians and their persecutions that most afflict the Church; nor the Robespierres and their guillotines; nor the Stalins and their gulags. The most serious threat lies in the traitors from within. Among them, the most pernicious is the one who betrays himself. Judas was called from the beginning to be a minister of God, a cultivator in the vineyard. Before betraying Jesus, however, he betrayed his own vocation. It would have been better, therefore, if he had not been born (cf. Mt 26:24)...

The conclusion of the parable highlights the dynamism of grace, which never goes to waste: the Kingdom of God is taken from the Sanhedrin – unfaithful vinedressers – and given to the new chosen people “that will produce its fruit” (Mt 21:43), that is, to the baptized, participants in the very invincibility of the Church.

And the enemies of the vineyard? Will they emerge unscathed? The answer emanates from the lips of the Saviour – the stone rejected by the builders – in the verse following this Sunday’s passage: “The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls” (Mt 21:44). Christ and His Mystical Body not only resist their enemies; they reduce them to dust.

If Judas had sought the maternal help of the Blessed Virgin, history would have been different. She is the “watchtower” that not only watches over us and surrounds us with loving care and protection, but also crushes the serpent’s head at all times (cf. Gn 3:15). United with her, triumph over the enemies – including the most internal ones – will always be guaranteed! ✠



Gustavo Kralj

Parable of the wicked tenants - Museum of Religious Art, Cuzco (Peru)

Revolving Around the Right Axis



✠ Fr. Isoldino José Quintão, EP

In the immense domain of creation, from the macrocosm to the microcosm – man – everything rotates around an axis. From this concept we derive expressions such as “out of orbit,” “revolving around the right axis,” “staying on track.” That the world suffers from a pivotal crisis – and is, to a large extent, “off track” – and that divine intervention is urgently needed to bring it “back on track” is a truth that needs no demonstration!

The parable of the wedding banquet seems to mirror the disorder of the current world: some do not heed the king’s invitation, others beat his ambassadors to death, a man enters the hall without the appropriate attire.

Although the primary function of food is the maintenance of life and physical health, it possesses, on a higher plane, the capacity to foster human conviviality and the practice of virtue. In Sacred Scripture, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared numerous times to a banquet. And Divine Providence willed that our need for food should prepare us for the Eucharistic Banquet, in which Jesus offers Himself to us as bread for the sustenance of our souls.

For millennia the Divine Craftsman elaborated the restoration His masterpiece, disfigured by the disobedience of our first parents, providentially preparing the nuptials of His Son with humanity. After the fall, at the root of which was the forbidden fruit (cf. Gn 2:16-17), the Lord educated the people through various perceptible signs, such as

manna and ritual sacrifices. In the “fullness of time” (Eph 1:10), when iniquity reached its apogee, attempting to eliminate God Himself, He formed the New Eve, capable of conceiving the Eternal Word. It is at this moment that, through Mary Most Holy, the Mother of Grace, the Trinity offered to the baptized the renewed fruits of life and divine knowledge.

With the Eucharist, Christ grants to the children of Adam the “Bread of Life” (Jn 6:51), prefigured by the fruit of the “tree of life” (Gn 3:24) in the Garden of Eden and promised to the victor in the Apocalypse (cf. Rv 2:7).

In the parable, the wedding garment designates the white baptismal robe, which we need to keep spotless by means of a righteousness of life, the practice of good works, and the observance of the Commandments. At the banquet of the Holy Mass, when Christ gives Himself as food (cf. Mt 26:26), we receive the graces necessary to reach such a sublime goal.

It is therefore necessary to approach the Eucharist with the proper dispositions, for St. Paul warns that to eat the Flesh of Christ unworthily and to drink His Blood unworthily is to eat and drink one’s own condemnation (cf. 1 Cor 11:27-29).

If the Sacrament of the Altar is the centre of our existence, everything will revolve around the proper axis: first and foremost, our soul will, and consequently, so will everything related to it in the order of the universe. ✠



Parable of the wedding feast, by Dirck Dircksz. Santvoort - St. Catherine’s Convent Museum, Utrecht (Netherlands)

The parable of the wedding banquet seems to reflect a certain disorder in the modern world. How can it be put “back on track”?

More Important than the Coin Is the Image on It!



Fr. Thiago Geraldo, EP

While Pharisees and Herodians argue over the tax coin, Jesus shows them that what matters most is understanding the image engraved on it

The One who spent His life doing good (cf. Acts 10:38) is now fighting His last battles before operating the Redemption. The hatred against Him reaches a apex, manifested in this Sunday Liturgy in saccharine terms: “Teacher, we know that You are a truthful man and that You teach the way of God in accordance with the truth” (Mt 22:16). The authors of this scheme are the Pharisees who, by sending their disciples to ensnare Jesus in some contradiction, ally themselves with their political enemies, the Herodians.

The Pharisees longed for liberation from all civil authority over the chosen people; the Herodians, on the contrary, had accommodated themselves to paying tribute to the Romans. Jesus thus finds Himself between two groups that, despite their differences, converge in the desire to eliminate Him.

Upon presenting a matter of conscience to Our Lord – “Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?” (Mt 22:17) – they seek to corner Him. In the Pharisaic view, the levy is owed to God, not to emperors. If Jesus defended the payment, He would incur popular hatred, being considered a false prophet; if He advised against it, He would be guilty of insurrection against Roman authority.

The subtlety of the question, hidden behind the mask of hypocrisy, demands a prodigiously perspicacious answer. Divine simplicity limits His response to asking for the object in dispute: “‘Show Me the coin that pays the census tax.’ Then they handed Him the Roman coin” (Mt 22:19).

At that time, the Romans granted subjugated peoples the favour of minting their own copper coins, featuring animal or plant figures; however, silver coins – the only ones accepted for paying tribute – circulated throughout the empire and bore the effigy of Caesar, crowned with laurels.

The truth of the facts is the perfect answer from Our Lord, for if, in theory, the Pharisees repudiated the tax to Caesar, in practice they used his currency unscrupulously... One hypocrisy after another! The definitive sentence of the Divine Master echoes through the centuries: “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Mt 22:21).

This divine teaching will span the centuries, for it establishes the necessary concord between the civil and ecclesiastical order: both derive from God and must converge towards the common good, attending to the spiritual and material needs of society. This harmony must begin within us, for we carry engraved in our being both the image of Caesar, manifested in our physical needs, and the image of God, as revealed at the beginning of creation: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gn 1:26).

If we weep when we lose a valuable coin, should we not also lament when we disfigure the image of God imprinted on our soul? St. Augustine aptly summarizes it: “As Caesar seeks his image in his coin, so God seeks His in your soul. ‘Render unto Caesar,’ He said, ‘the things that are Caesar’s.’ What does Caesar ask of you? His image. What does God ask of you? His image. But Caesar’s is in the coin, God’s is in you.”¹ ✠

“The tribute coin”, by Leopold Layer - National Gallery of Slovenia, Ljubljana; inset, The Aureus of Tiberius, a Roman coin from the time of Our Lord



¹ ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO. *Sermon 113A*, n.8.

The Greatest Commandment



✠ Fr. Hamilton José Naville, EP

This Sunday, the Liturgy offers us a passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew, which narrates an encounter between Jesus Christ and the Pharisees. It was not the first time they had tried to trap Him. Despite so many rebukes received, they appear again before the Redeemer to ask Him: “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (Mt 22:36).

St. Thomas Aquinas remarks that, as well as being cavilling, the question was presumptuous, for “one ought not to ask about the greatest, who have not fulfilled the least.”¹ Our Lord then answers: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment” (Mt 22:37-38). Regarding this, the Angelic Doctor comments: “God must be loved as the first thing to be loved, since He Himself is the first end, whereas all other things are loved because of their end. Therefore, whoever loves God as an end, loves Him with all their heart.”²

The Saviour’s following words constitute more than an interpretation of the Law; it is a revelation of God’s own Being. Jesus not only unites the tablets of the Law with prophecy, but establishes charity as the core of the spiritual life: “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The whole Law and the prophets depend on these two commandments” (Mt 22:39-40). In this regard, Aquinas³ clarifies that this “yourself” is not identified with selfishness, but indicates that one must love others as oneself by virtue of love for God. Pope Benedict XVI⁴ elaborates on this perspective in the encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, teaching that love for God and love for neighbour are fundamentally two sides of the same coin, inseparable and complementary. Whoever truly loves their neighbour loves God, and vice versa.

Our Lord is Love itself, who loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), to the point of giving Himself on the Cross as a friend (cf. Jn 15:13) and making us heirs of eternal blessedness. Jesus also draws us into

union with Him, which becomes effective through charity, the bond of perfection (cf. Col 3:14). All other virtues are included in this one.⁵ To this end, it is fitting to follow the recommendation of St. Paul, that is, to become an imitator of the saints and of the Lord, “receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit” (1 Thes 1:6).

As we journey along this sometimes tortuous path, may our love for our neighbour not be a mere human endeavour, but a concrete reflection of the Father’s absolute love for each of us, purifying our understanding and our will, to prepare us for the beatific vision, where the supreme virtue – charity – will finally be the only Law that will reign eternally: “Love never ends” (1 Cor 13:8). ✠

Jesus reveals that the fullness of the Law and the Prophets resides, inextricably, in the supreme commandment of love for God and neighbour

¹ ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Super Matthæum*, c.XXII, lect.4, n.1811.

² *Ibid.*, n.1813.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, n.1819.

⁴ Cf. BENEDICT XVI. *Deus caritas est*, n.16-18.

⁵ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiæ*. II-II, q.44, a.1.



Christ the Redeemer, by Giovanni da Milano - Holy Cross Basilica, Florence (Italy); at left, the Ten Commandments - St. Patrick’s Church, Junction City (Ohio)



Evangelizing Every Creature

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” How should we heed the command of Our Lord Jesus Christ? If He recommended proclaiming the Gospel “to every creature,” should we preach even to inanimate and irrational beings? How can we make ourselves “heard” by them?

✠ **Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP**

To have a better understanding of the One who is the example for all Christians, upon encountering the various traits of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels and the Tradition of the Church, it is important for us to analyse His conduct in depth, both according to His outward expressions – His voice, gestures, and gaze – and, above all, according to the manifestations of His spirit, the way He addressed people and the customs and traditions of life that He observed.

One of these aspects of Our Lord that draws our attention is the system of teaching He adopted during the three years of His public life: why did He dedicate His instruction to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 15:24)? Why did He begin His apostolate with the Jewish people?

St. Thomas Aquinas,¹ when dealing with this particular, gives four reasons why it was fitting that the Divine Master should preach first only to the chosen people.

First of all, as St. Paul affirms (cf. Rom 15:8), to fulfil the promises made to the patriarchs and prophets in the Old Testament, that the Messiah would be born from their descendants. Secondly, because the Jews constituted the nation closest to the Divinity through faith and worship, and thus it was demonstrated that His coming was from God, who does everything with order and hierarchy. The third reason is of a diplomatic nature: if Our Lord had addressed the Gentiles and the Samaritans, He could have been accused of not caring about His own people. Finally, because it was on the Cross that He conquered dominion over the nations (cf. Phil 2:8-11; Col 2:11-15).

Therefore, although Jesus occasionally engaged in direct apostolate with some pagans – such as, for example, the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4) and the Greeks (cf. Jn 12:20-23), as well as the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman, whose faith He praised (cf. Mt 8:5-13; 15:21-28) – we must

consider that, until the Passion, Our Lord preferred to exercise His mission specifically among the Jewish people, because He had come “to His own” (Jn 1:11).

This does not mean that the Saviour rejected the Gentiles. On the contrary: having died on Calvary to save mankind, He desired that the Apostles, after His Resurrection, bring the light of doctrine to the whole world, so that the effects of His Most Precious Blood would penetrate souls and all humanity would benefit from the Redemption.

However, who could prove that the Word would spread throughout the world? There are certain works in history about which Providence offers no guarantees for success, but only somewhat cryptic indications, for if it gave clear proof, what merit would those who embraced the good cause have? Thus, in founding the Church, God granted graces to people of faith so that they might recognize it as an infallible institution, destined for total victory;

for unbelievers, however, it was possible to harbour doubts.

Origin of the missionary nature of the Church

By sending His disciples to spread the truth to all peoples, the Redeemer showed His power, giving their preaching such great effectiveness that they ended up converting people who had never even heard of the Person of Jesus. There were twelve men, followed by seventy-two others, transformed from “poor men” (Ps 113:7) into true angels, endowed with the ability to cast out demons and perform great miracles!

At the same time, Our Lord gave the Gentiles the possibility of practising an act of faith greater than that of the Jewish people themselves because, without receiving the Gospel directly from His divine lips, but only through the testimony of others, they accepted it more than those who benefited from the signs and discourses He had given. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (Jn 20:29).

Where did this first impetus for conquest come from?

It came from Above and had its origin in the love between the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. God brought forth the universe out of nothing to manifest outwardly this love which, from all eternity, is His life and happiness. And He created humanity in such a way that the Incarnation of the Word and the sanctification of souls by the Holy Spirit would be possible. Therefore, from the beginning of creation, the Lord is constantly in contact with men to make them aware of the truth and to save them.

The missionary nature of the Holy Church is based on this will of the Son and the Spirit to be sent – in Latin, *missi* – and on the Father’s design in sending Them.

Indeed, all our faith is based on and centred around Our Lord Jesus Christ, as He Himself affirmed: “He who believes has eternal life.” (Jn 6:47). Coming to earth, He brought us Revelation, for the very divine commu-

Moon would no longer shine, and the world would be plunged into darkness.

Thus, the Church is Holy because the Most Precious Blood of Jesus washes, waters, and anoints it, and the power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in souls in the state of grace, vivifies and sanctifies it, giving the Mystical Body of Christ a strong, firm, and indestructible nature, worthy of Our Lord’s promise: “he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one, it will crush him” (Mt 21:44).³

Loving His Church, God grants the faithful special gifts and graces, from which then flourish the most magnificent works of virtue and truth, as well as so many riches and wonders of art. There is, therefore, no complete beauty born outside the Church. One may find some pulchritude, for example, in a Japanese pagoda or in certain buildings in India, or even in constructions like the Alhambra in Granada; but the beauties existing in cultures outside the Catholic Religion are always incomplete and improvable.

The purpose of the Church’s mission

What, then, is the purpose of the Holy Church’s missionary action?

Since our souls are the object of God’s infinite love, it is this same love that impels us to seek out all people, to bring them to be part of the great divine family.

This movement resembles a circle that, starting from one point, returns to the place from which it started. Indeed, our origin is in the Blessed Trinity, and our ultimate end is the same Blessed Trinity.

The Catholic nature of the Church – from the Greek *katholikós*, which



Hugo Grados

The Redeemer sent His disciples to all peoples, imparting great effectiveness to their preaching

The preaching of St. Francis Xavier, by Pedro Atanasio Bocanegra - Cathedral of the Incarnation Museum, Guadix (Spain). On the previous page, in the foreground: Jesus preaching to the crowds - Chapel of the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio (Texas); background, view of the Sea of Galilee (Israel)

nications made in the Old Testament were given in view of the coming of the Messiah.

The Church, therefore, receives all its lifeblood from Christ, its Head, just as – according to the Church Fathers – the Moon receives all its light from the Sun.² If the Sun were extinguished, the

means *universal* – comes from the necessity for the mission. The great Captain called Jesus Christ commands us with these words: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Mt 28:19-20).

We cannot restrict this promise of Our Lord’s abiding presence with us solely and exclusively to the Eucharistic Presence, since, for a long time, consecrated hosts were not reserved in the tabernacle, a custom that was gradually established in view of the need to bring viaticum to the sick. It is above all at the time of the apostolate that He makes Himself present, as He affirmed in another passage: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).

Now, since the Church is universal, it must extend its roots to all ends of the earth, influencing environments, homes, and families with the “psychology” of the Gospel, so that we may understand that our individual vocation is also universal. We need to have the soul of an apostle to the point of desiring to convert all peoples.

Looking at each one of us, we see that we are but clay, but if we allow ourselves to be transformed by God, His love will make us great saints, and we will go out into the world inflamed with the desire to conquer the face of the earth for Our Lord, providing a pretext for grace to spread generously and bringing souls closer to the practice of the true religion, in the endeavour that all may walk towards perfection.

However, if we analyse the world, we will see that Jesus’ missionary mandate has not yet been completely fulfilled, for many peoples are yet to be evangelized.

Let us, therefore, be instruments docile to the breath of the Holy Spirit, making use of all the elements at our disposal and employing the gifts and qualities granted by Providence to make the Catholic Church known throughout the world.

What does it mean to evangelize “every creature”?

This leads us to another very important consideration. At the end of the Gospel of St. Mark there is a truly beautiful detail which has always caught my attention, and on which I have not found a single commentator focusing. This Evangelist, unlike the others, emphasizes the statement of Our Lord, already resurrected: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15).

Now, if He recommended announcing the Gospel “to every creature,” should we then preach not only to men and women, but even to inanimate and irrational beings? “Creature” includes stones and plants, birds and puppies... How can we make ourselves “heard” by them?

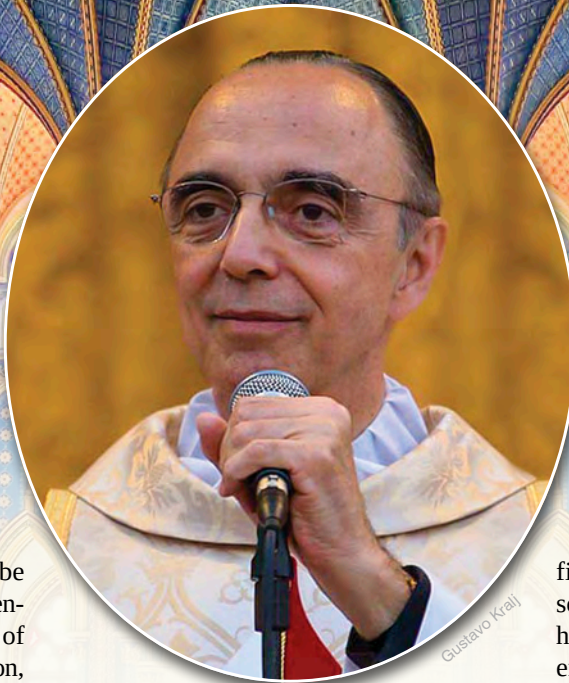
It seems to me that these words have a very interesting meaning with regard to the vocation of the baptized, whose actions aim to place Our Lord Jesus Christ at the centre of creation, so that it may be conformed to Him.

By sanctifying the soul and making it a participant in the divine nature, Baptism introduces into it the procession of virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, giving it a different vision of the universe and equipping it not only to control its passions and evil inclinations, but also to act upon the beings that surround it. Now, if man is linked to the five levels of creation – the mineral, the plant and the animal kingdoms, to the other human beings, and even to the Angels – then the effects of the Baptism received must be felt throughout the entire sphere that surrounds them, sacralizing and, so to speak, evangelizing even inanimate matter.



The catholic nature of the Church comes from its missionary mandate: Jesus Christ commands us to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit

“Baptism of Ixtlilxóchitl”, by José Vivar y Valderrama - National History Museum, Mexico City



Thus, when a building is to be constructed, it is necessary to use engineering knowledge to make use of mineral elements – sand, bricks, iron, marble – in order to build churches, palaces or houses upon which the seal of the Gospel is imprinted. Because an arch, a column, a stained-glass window, a sculpture, a window, a door, a railing, the steps of a staircase, or even the colour of the ceilings, can be instruments used to speak of God. The modern spirit, on the contrary, focuses on constructing buildings quickly, aiming for functionality, with little concern for aesthetics. And the result are works contrary to the Gospel, more suited to preaching the axioms of hell.

In relation to a piece of land, one should strive to cultivate it to the point of transforming it into a magnificent garden, according to the spirit of Our Lord.

With regard to living creatures themselves, such as birds or butterflies, one should do everything possible to ensure that they have a good environment and multiply in such a way that they beautify the landscapes.

And so the Gospel must be preached constantly, not only in architecture or botany, but in cooking, in fabrics, in clothing, in vestments, in a beautiful organ, in harmonious singing – Gregorian or polyphonic –, in symbols, as well as in gestures, in demeanour, in the way of performing any kind of

The Gospel must not only be preached to people, but it must pervade every area of human action, including gestures and attitudes

Msgr. João in August of 2007

work, in ways of being and behaving, in relationships with others, in the administration of the Sacraments...

St. Paul himself affirms in his epistle to the Romans that creatures – that is, the whole universe – having suffered the mark of sin, groan for the day when they may receive the influxes of Redemption (cf. Rom 8:22-23). And the Thomistic view defends the thesis that at the end of the world, after the Judgement, the work created by God will reach a true apotheosis of splendour, as never before!⁴

Nothing, however, surpasses preaching through the practice of virtue, through which we strive for the world to be transformed into a true Paradise, where the principles of the Gospel and the sense of hierarchy are applied to everything that exists, to the contrary of egalitarianism, prosaism, and vulgarity.

In Heaven, nothing is crooked, broken, or ugly; on the contrary, everything is of unimaginable beauty. A single one of the celestial wonders would

fill our eternity! God willed it thus so that the bodily senses will be in harmony with the soul, which will enjoy the supreme happiness of the beatific vision, which consists in seeing God face to face. ✠

Excerpts from oral expositions given between 1992 and 2015

¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. III, q.42, a.1.

² Cf. CCC 748.

³ Regarding this passage from St. Matthew, St. Thomas Aquinas states: “The Church similarly can never be destroyed, neither by persecution nor by error. Indeed, the Church grew during the persecutions, and both those who persecuted her and those against whom she threatened completely failed [...] As regards errors, indeed, the more errors arise, the more surely truth is made to appear [...] Nor shall the Church be destroyed by the temptations of the demons. For she is like a tower towards which all flee who war against the devil” (ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Explanation of the Apostles’ Creed*, a.9).

⁴ “Hence those bodies also will need to receive a greater inflow from the Divine goodness than now, not indeed so as to change their species, but so as to add a certain perfection of glory: and such will be the renewal of the world. Wherefore at the one same time, the world will be renewed, and man will be glorified” (ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*. Supl., q.91, a.1).

One Church, One Mission

Teacher of truth, the Church was invested by the Divine Saviour with the sublime mission of being the faithful and only interpreter of Revelation, to maternally lead all peoples back to union with Christ

✠ **Dcn. Adriel Brandelero, EP**



Traduttore, traditore – translator, traitor”: so jokes the Italian adage which, mixing irony and reality, has been confirmed so many times by facts and by book editions...

With good reason, the task of translation constitutes a moral challenge for many scholars; after all, it is not a simple matter of choosing words, but conveying concepts, a most valuable asset for those who know how to recognize their true meanings.

To translate does not mean to find a perfect match of dictionary definitions, but to preserve the homogeneity of the thought of the one who conceived it. This is the challenge, because “if there were perfect equivalence from language to language, the result would not be translation; it would be a replica. And if such replicas were possible on a regular basis, there would not be any languages, just one vast, blurred international jargon, a sort of late cancellation of the story of Babel.”¹

The deeper, more complex, and nuanced the author’s thought, the greater the risks become for the *traduttore*... How, for example, can we glimpse the concerns that afflicted the wise men of Alexandria who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek? What about the responsibility that fell upon St. Jerome when he produced the so-

called Vulgate in Latin, containing all the books of Sacred Scripture?

“For who has known the mind of the Lord” (Rom 11:34) to represent it faithfully? “Translating” the Holy Spirit is no easy task...

These dilemmas of rendering texts can help us to better understand the mission that Christ entrusted to His Church: to evangelize all peoples (cf. Mt 28:19-20), a responsibility incom-

nounced by the Father from all eternity, as St. John recorded in the prologue of the fourth Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1).

Different cultures, but one same Church

Would it not be more perfect, though, if all men could learn of Him just as He is, without the resources of human language, which are always conditioned by times and contexts?

First of all, not everything that is most perfect is within the realm of our intellect, for the “vernacular” form of the Eternal Word is known only to the Father: “no one knows the Son except the Father” (Mt 11:27). We are incapable of understanding Him in Himself. Therein lies the mystery of our Faith; and this is why we need a “translator” invested with this divine mission: the Church.

Furthermore, it pleased the Most High to make all things from nothing, based on the Word, for “He is the image of the invisible God, the First-born of all creation” (Col 1:15). Now, if everything that exists is modelled on Christ, creatures must reflect His perfections. And it was necessary, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches,² for multiple and varied beings to exist so that the divine likeness might be more perfectly manifested in them.

To His faithful interpreter, the Church, Christ confided the mission of evangelizing all peoples, leading them to reflect God in their own customs

parably higher than that of language interpreters.

And, while it is legitimate for us to resort to the phenomenon of translation to illustrate that of evangelization, it is well to consider that the Church’s mission consists in translating only one Word: the Eternal. He was pro-

Now, if the diversity of irrational and inanimate beings is magnificent, man, the synthesis of the created universe, shines even more brightly. In the plurality of ethnicities and cultures, the infinite perfections of the Divine Craftsman shine with greater splendour. Different environments generate unique customs, behaviours, lifestyles, and ways of thinking, which form an immense and varied panoply of artistic and cultural expressions.

In short, all peoples are impelled by the Paraclete to “pronounce,” with their own customs and lights, the same Eternal Word that the Father sent into the world, restoring all things in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10).

This is the maternal mission of the Church: to welcome under her protective mantle all the peoples of the earth and to help them understand the Word of the Father and to pronounce it anew in their lives and works. The *Catechism* explains: “‘The eternal Father, in accordance with the utterly gratuitous and mysterious design of His wisdom and goodness, created the whole universe and chose to raise up men to share in His own divine life,’ to which He calls all men in His Son. ‘The Father... determined to call together in a holy Church those who should believe in Christ.’”³

The only authorized interpreter of the Word

In the Divine Master’s mandate to the Apostles – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19a) – we find the divine principles that should govern the mission of the Church.

Before all else, we observe that the supernatural dynamism that motivates Christ’s disciples to the great adventure of evangelization also impels them to leave even their own origins to instruct those who have gone astray. This reveals the same method already applied by Jesus: transmitting the Faith through personal contact.

Considering this point, we recall the first steps of the Good News, as in the

apostolate of the deacon St. Philip with the minister of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. Her subject was reading the prophet Isaiah; he knew the words, but he could not grasp the message: “‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless some one guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:30-31). To sit with and to explain... what a beautiful summary of the mission of evangelizing. Instruction alone is not enough for

Instruction alone is not enough for the Word of God to be understood and loved; it is necessary to develop relationships and to teach by example

the Word of God to be understood and loved; it is necessary to develop a relationship, to draw near, and to teach by example the path that leads to Him.

But even this was not enough, for the aforementioned mandate of the Lord continues: “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19b). The effectiveness of evangelization depends eminently on the merits and grace of Our Lord, conferred, through the “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1), initially in the waters of Baptism, in which the soul receives divine life, but also in the reception of the Eucharist, in which the faithful partakes of Christ Himself, in Confirmation, in which he is strengthened by Him, and in the tribunal of Penance, where he is reconciled with God.

The goal of evangelization is conversion.

Our Redeemer further prescribes in the same passage: “teaching them



The effectiveness of evangelization depends eminently on the merits and grace of Our Lord, conferred through the “stewards of the mysteries of God”

St. Philip the deacon baptizes the Ethiopian, by Lorenzo Lippi; on the previous page, belfry of Our Lady of the Pillar Chapel, Ubatuba (Brazil)

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to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20).

This passage reminds us that, to be worthy of the wonders of the Gospel, it is necessary to carefully observe the teachings received from Our Lord. It is through correspondence to grace and the Holy Trinity’s presence in the soul that the progressive, serious, and profound transformation of the Catholic takes place, which will be consummated in his full configuration with Christ.

Accordingly, accepting the Good News necessarily implies conversion, for Christ Himself summarized His mission by establishing the obligation of doing penance, converting, and believing in the Gospel (cf. Mk 1:15). Thus, after saving the adulterous woman from the evil intentions of the elders, Jesus told her: “go, and do not sin again” (Jn 8:11). He repeated a similar

warning when he healed the paralytic by the pool of Bethesda: “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you” (Jn 5:14).

Thus, the Second Vatican Council teaches that “The Gospel of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of fallen man, it combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from the

permanent allurements of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. By riches coming from above, it makes fruitful, as it were from within, the spiritual qualities and traditions of every people of every age. It strengthens, perfects and restores them in Christ.”⁴

Evangelization and inculturation: synonyms or antonyms?

When we characterize the Church as *Catholic*, we affirm that She “is oriented towards the whole world, encompassing all times and addressing all cultures. Due to the universal nature of her mission, the Church must have the quality of adapting herself to different eras and cultural contexts.”⁵

In the last council, we also find the answer that guides the inculturation of the Church in the various nations. Far from adopting degrading customs unworthy of the Bride of Christ, she must insert herself into all peoples, impelled by the same movement that led the Eternal Word to subject Himself, in the Incarnation, to the social and cultural conditions of the men with whom He lived, in order to offer to all the mystery of salvation and true life.⁶

Far from being antonyms, evangelization and inculturation are phases of a the same grace granted to the people who have had the good fortune to receive the seed of the Gospel, to understand the Word of the Father, and to allow themselves to be penetrated by the life-giving light of the Holy Spirit, who works in the Church.

John Paul II explains the phenomenon of inculturation. “In the face of all the different and at times contrasting cultures present in the various parts of the world, inculturation seeks to obey Christ’s command to preach the Gospel to all nations even unto the ends of the earth. Such obedience does not signify either syncretism or a simple adaptation of the announcement of the Gospel, but rather the fact that the Gospel penetrates the very life of cultures, becomes incar-

When the Gospel message reaches the heart of peoples and cultures, it allows a new civilization to be born for Christ



“By riches coming from above, the Gospel of Christ makes fruitful, as it were from within, the spiritual qualities and traditions of every people of every age.”

St. Augustine of Canterbury converts the Anglo-Saxon King Ethelbert, illustration from the book: “The Imperial History of England”, by David Hume (edited)

nate in them, overcoming those cultural elements that are incompatible with the Faith and Christian living, and raising their values to the mystery of salvation which comes from Christ.”⁷

When the message of the Gospel reaches the heart of peoples and cultures, it allows a new civilization to be born for Christ, based on a transformation of lives, of customs, and of mentalities.

In this sense, Pope Paul VI taught that “for the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.”⁸

Pope Leo XIV corroborates this teaching when he affirms that “holiness is neither one option among many nor an abstract ideal, for it involves the very identity of every person who wishes to share in the life of the risen One.”⁹

When translation becomes teachery...

What discontent the Church, and Christ himself, feel when it can be perceived that activity labeled as evangelizing fails to “translate” the meaning of Revelation with purity!

Some examples of this regrettable fact can be found in the teachings of *Dominus Iesus*, which condemns the “relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what is true for

some would not be true for others; [...] the eclecticism of those who, in theological research, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection, or compatibility with Christian truth; finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church.”¹⁰

Now, if the mission of the Church is to evangelize, this is also the obligation of each of its members, especially those who hold the office of teaching, governing, and sanctifying.

To be another Christ through the laying on of hands means to be invested with the mission of being a “*traduttore*” of the Eternal Word, a task that makes the identification of the sacred min-

Each member of the Church has the duty to evangelize, especially those whose office it is to teach, govern and sanctify

ister with the merciful Heart of Jesus indispensable, as Pope Leo XIV exhorted in a recent message:

“The priest who has an upright, simple and pure heart can be contemplative in the midst of action, merciful and

faithful in times of trial, and joyful in the gift of himself. The world greatly needs pastors who offer more than simply words or programs; it needs the living witness of a reconciled heart that exudes the sweet fragrance of Christ’s holiness.”¹¹

Let us make these intentions of the Holy Father our own. After all, the world is already tired of “*traditori*”. ❖



Sergio Holmann

“The world greatly needs pastors who offer more than simply words or programs; it needs the living witness of a reconciled heart”

St. Francis Xavier - Shrine of Loyola, Azpeitia (Spain)

¹ APTER, Emily. Preface. In: CASSIN, Barbara (Ed.). *Dictionary of Untranslatables. A Philosophical Lexicon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014, p.xiv.

² Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. L.II, c.45.

³ CCC 759.

⁴ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Gaudium et spes*, n.58.

⁵ FERNÁNDEZ, Aurelio. *Teología Dogmática. Curso fun-*

damental de la Fe Católica. Madrid: BAC, 2009, p.748.

⁶ Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. *Ad gentes*, n.10.

⁷ ST. JOHN PAUL II. *Pastores dabo vobis*, n.55.

⁸ ST. PAUL VI. *Evangelii nuntiandi*, n.19.

⁹ LEO XIV. *Message to Priests on the Occasion of the Day of Prayer for the Sanctification of Priests*, 12/6/2026.

¹⁰ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH. *Dominus Iesus*, n.4.

¹¹ LEO XIV, op. cit.

The “land without evil”

Before the Catholic faith reached South America, the Guarani were searching for what they called “Yvy Mará He’y”, where they would find endless happiness. The missionaries led them there.

✠ Fr. Hernán Luis Cosp, EP



We are in the heart of the South American jungle in the 17th century. Through the thick undergrowth, we can hear a frenetic clamour of chanting voices, harsh trumpets, and noisy drums. The most typical of scenes unfolds: a prisoner, taken in combat and now surrounded by celebrating Guarani, awaits the final blow.

A similar end inevitably awaits those who fall under the power of the Guarani. Captured, the man is fattened and then slaughtered. His flesh will feed everyone from the elderly to the children. His tibias will become trumpets. His skull will serve as a cup.

These are the Guarani customs in 17th-century Paraguay.

* * *

Without leaving the place, let us move on to

the 18th century. About a hundred years have passed, and everything has changed.

A true Guarani city rises. Wide, paved streets connect extensive plantations to strong, large stone buildings. Let us enter one of them: the church.

There, Holy Mass is celebrated. Religious music resounds. A large choir of mixed voices is accompanied by a full orchestra: pipe organ, harps, trumpets, trombones, flutes, clarinets, and bassoons. The chalices, the vestments, and the temple itself were produced by the baptized hands of the Guarani people.

This is the life in a Jesuit reduction in 18th-century Paraguay.¹

The reductions

The history of the *reductions* – a name originating from the Latin expression *reductio ad unum*, to indicate the gathering of indigenous people in a single location – began in 1587, when Dom Francisco de Vitoria, OP, the Por-

tuguese Bishop of Tucumán – a region encompassing present-day Paraguay and part of Argentina – requested assistance from the Jesuit missionaries in Brazil. He needed help in his diocese, where the most common language, Guarani, was similar to the Tupi used in Brazilian lands.

The request was accepted, and no effort was spared. Every day the sick were visited, Mass was celebrated, and a sermon was delivered. After this apostolate, always around the altar, the number of indigenous people baptized reached, on average, three hundred per day.

But preaching was not enough. Had not the Divine Master taught that the seed of the word only grows in fertile ground (cf. Mt 13:18-23)? Well, the missionaries decided to civilize by evangelizing and to evangelize by civilizing. To that end, they created the aforementioned reductions. These communities, supervised by Jesuit priests – generally no more than two –

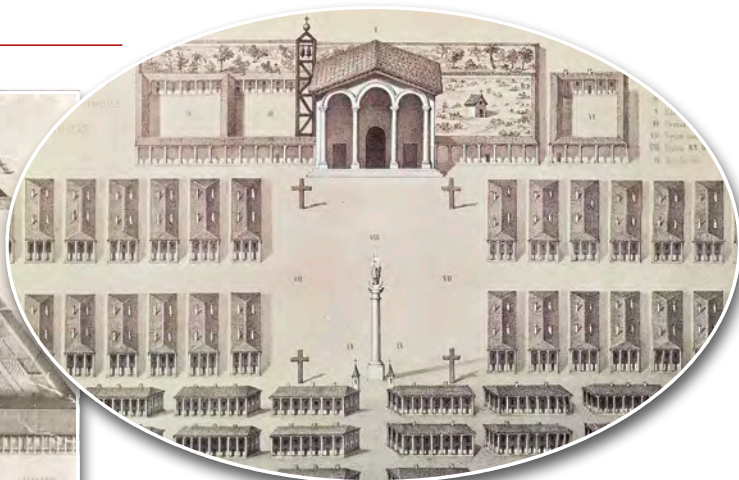
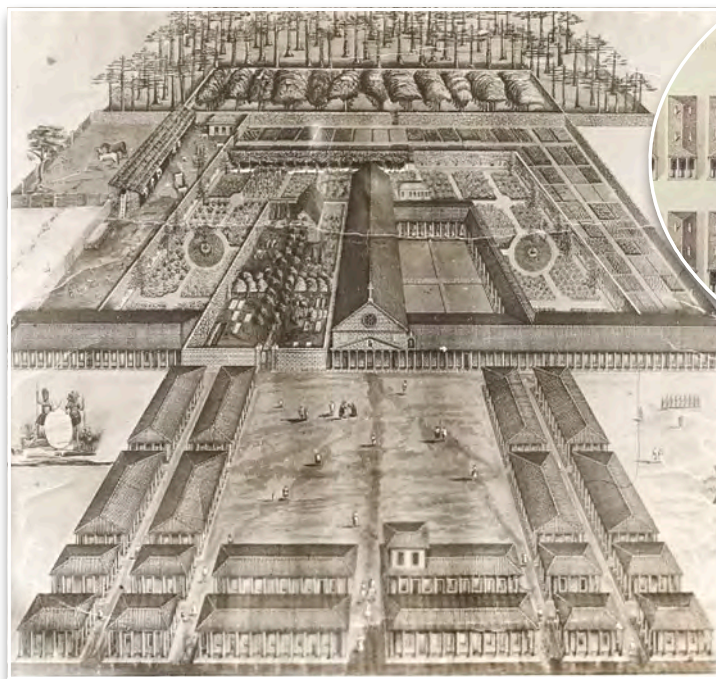
Attending the appeal of the Bishop of Tucumán, the Jesuit missionaries resolved to civilize by evangelizing and evangelize by civilizing

Ruins of the Reduction of St. Michael Archangel - St. Michael of the Missions (Brazil)



Vini Araujo (CC by-sa 4.0)





The monarchical point of each reduction was the church. There beat the heart of the community; the hospital, the cemetery, and the administrative centres were built up around it

Urban plans for the reductions in the old Jesuit Province of Paraguay: above, the Reduction of Our Lady of Candelaria, in the present-day city of Candelaria (Argentina) - The Itamaraty Historical and Diplomatic Museum, Rio de Janeiro; at left, the Reduction of St. John the Baptist, in what is now the municipality of Entre-Ijuís (Brazil)

lived under the rule of political and religious laws, allowing them to abandon their previous, erratic, semi-nomadic lives. On average, three thousand five hundred people inhabited each settlement, and up to six thousand in some.

The first such experience, the St. Ignatius Guazú Reduction, was established twenty-five leagues from Asunción in 1609. In the same year, one hundred and sixty leagues east of the same capital, the Our Lady of Loreto Reduction was born. And the number of new societies grew with extraordinary speed.

The city of God

The monarchical point of each reduction was the church. There beat the heart of the community. The crowded daily Mass was celebrated, catechism was administered, numerous Confessions were heard, and marriages were celebrated. From there also flowed all spiritual blossoming. Vices, once so deeply rooted, were trampled by virtuous life, asceticism, and prayer.

Flanking the temple stood the hospital, the cemetery, and the administrative centres such as the municipal council,

and the school. The main avenues had permanent shade due to the awnings over them. The buildings were generally made with thick masonry blocks, more than a metre thick, and the roof framing had enormous beams. Thus, the buildings maintained a cool temperature and lasted for centuries to come.

Schools for all ages and conditions

The sons of St. Ignatius established a legislative council in the reductions, formed by the Guarani themselves. Each community thus became a small autonomous republic, similar to the ancient and famous Greek city-states.

There was also a cavalry corps and an infantry squadron that used both the traditional weapons of the indigenous peoples – the macaná, bow and sling – as well as swords and rifles.

Agriculture began to provide sustenance for the Guarani, who previously depended on hunting and fishing. In each city there were about seven large gardens and orchards, abundant in fruit, vegetables and medicinal plants.

Industry also developed. Using modern brick kilns and forges, the Guarani built mills, sawmills and tanneries, as

well as sugar and olive oil mills, and even clock-making workshops.

The arts flourished. The first printing press in the Rio de la Plata region, for example, was established in a reduction. Sculptures, paintings, carpets, musical instruments, liturgical vessels and linens – with lace, jewels, and precious metals – everything was crafted by the natives according to the most refined taste of the Old Continent.

Among the gifts that the newly baptized manifested with the greatest brilliance was music. French, German, and Italian compositions were played with the corresponding expression to such a degree that it was enough to hide the instrumentalists from the public's view, in order for them to believe they were listening to orchestras from the other side of the Atlantic.

Attacks and defence

Thus, over the decades, missionaries founded numerous centres of civilization that, in the 18th century, would extend for six hundred and fifty kilometres from north to south, and about six hundred kilometres from east to west, in what is now Paraguay, Uruguay, north-



Maurice Chédel (CC by-sa 3.0)

eastern Argentina, southern Brazil, and Bolivia.

As could not be otherwise, envy emerged in this context of prosperity. Some reductions were undone by those who should have been most interested in them: the Bishops and the civil governors. Others succumbed to the *bandeirantes*². An inhuman hatred led them to exterminate both the buildings and the Guarani who inhabited them, “robbing, plundering churches, tying up natives, killing and slaughtering children.”³ Such was the massacre and enslavement that, by around 1630, the number of captive indigenous people exceeded three hundred thousand.⁴

But the indigenous people, upon receiving the faith, had not lost their belligerence. In 1641, on the banks of the Uruguay River, the Battle of Mbororé took place. Eight hundred *bandeirantes*, armed with rifles, allied with six thousand Tupi, were defeated by four thousand Guarani, armed only with

three hundred rifles, arrows, spears, and slings. And through war, peace was made... for a time.

After 1750, when the reductions reached their peak, the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, under territorial or economic pretexts, expelled the Jesuits from the entire so-called “Guarani Republic.”

In a short time, the strength of the reductions, under the charge of civil governors, became just a memory. Then they were abandoned. Finally, destroyed. Today, only ruins remain.

The realized dreams of a people

Before the Catholic Faith arrived in South America, the Guarani lived

on a hope. They descended valleys, crossed rivers, tore through forests, and climbed mountains, “driven by an inner fever that made them forget fatigue and hunger.”⁵ It was the dream of finding what they called *Yvy Mará He’y* – the “land without evil,” where the god-men, immortality, and endless happiness dwelled.

This was age-long pilgrimage of these nomads, until priests from a distant world brought them Baptism – making them children of God, immortal “godmen” fit for the eternal dwellings – and helped them build a society free of primitivism, where the striving for sanctity left no room for evil and sin: a true “land without evil.” ✚

Within this context of prosperity envy emerged, leading to the destruction of a society devoid of primitivism and pervaded with virtue: a veritable “land without evil”...

Ruins of the Reduction of the Most Holy Trinity of Paraná - Trindad (Paraguay); at left, the Guarani calvary in the Reduction of St. Francis Xavier, in present-day San Javier (Argentina) - Museum of America, Madrid

¹ This article is based on the canonical Master's thesis in Theology, from the Pontifical Bolivarian University, Medellín, Colombia (2025), by the same author, entitled: “Yvy Mará He’y” (*la Tierra sin Mal*): *la labor civilizadora y evangelizadora de los jesuitas*

en las reducciones del Paraguay [“Yvy Mará He’y” (*the Land without Evil*): *the Jesuits' civilizing and evangelizing work in the reductions of Paraguay*].

² Title designating captains of armed exploration expeditions of Brazil's vast unmapped ter-

ritories, from the end of the sixteenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century.

³ RUIZ DE MONTTOYA, SJ, Antonio. *Conquista espiritual*. Bilbao: Corazón de Jesús, 1892, p.146.

⁴ Cf. LUGON, Clovis. *A república “comunista” cristã dos guaranis: 1610-1768*. 3.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1977, p.63-64.

⁵ GÁLVEZ, Lucía. *Guaraníes y jesuitas. De la Tierra sin Mal al Paraíso*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995, p.15.



From Sinner to Evangelizer

✠ Fr. Leonardo Miguel Barraza, EP



The words of the Divine Master to the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:1-42), illuminated by the commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas (cf. *Super Ioannem*, c.IV, lect.3, n.624-630), are one of the most illustrative portraits of Johannine theology on salvation. The woman's act of abandoning her water jar at Jacob's well and running to the city of Sychar to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah is an eloquent symbol of the transformation that grace produces in the human soul.

The Angelic Doctor's teachings on this episode highlight three aspects.

The first is the importance of detachment from the things of this world and its concupiscences. Indeed, the graces and gifts the Samaritan woman received in the encounter with Jesus led her to renounce her original intention to draw water, causing her to yearn only for the spring "welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:14). Just as the brothers Peter and Andrew, as well as James and John, had left their nets upon hearing Jesus' call (cf. Mt 4:18-22), similarly the Samaritan woman now abandoned her water jar, a symbol of her earthly concerns, to follow Christ.

Secondly, and as a corollary to the previous point, the Samaritan woman did not keep the treasure for herself, but assumed the role of a fervent

evangelizer. Her charitable zeal was evident in her initiative to go out in search of her fellow countrymen: "[She] went away into the city, and said to the people" (Jn 4:28). In making her invitation to them, she was shrewd: "Come, see a Man who told me all that I ever did" (Jn 4:29), for "she clearly knew that if they drank from that spring, upon see-

ing Him, they would experience what she herself had" (n. 626).

As St. Thomas Aquinas observes, she did not immediately declare that Jesus was the Messiah, thus avoiding unnecessary rejections and hasty judgements. She cleverly raised the question – "Can this be the Christ?" (Jn 4:29) – while, at the same time, referring to credible and well-known facts, following the conduct of a true evangelizer by drawing those people not to herself, but solely to God.

Thirdly, the Samaritan woman's testimony gained authenticity because it was born of humility. Jesus revealed that He knew her licentious life (cf. Jn 4:18), and she, far from resenting it, recognized the greatness of the One who called her to repentance. This attitude gave such strength to her words that her listeners even said: "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world" (Jn 4:42).

The Samaritan woman was transformed from a sinner into an ardent evangelizer. She emerges as a model for all those who, throughout the history of the Church, have rejected the illusions of the world to dedicate themselves exclusively to the salvation of souls. May this also be our purpose in life, so that, with fidelity, we may attain the eternal inheritance! ✠



Gustavo Kralj

After a sincere conversion, the Samaritan woman became a fervent evangelizer and a model for all those who reject the illusions of the world to dedicate themselves exclusively to the salvation of souls

Jesus and the Samaritan woman – St. Patrick's Parish, Boston (Massachusetts)



“Speak with Me, little soul”

Through His conversations with Gabrielle Bossis, Jesus also addresses us, saying: “Do not leave Me alone in your hearts.”



✦ **Bruna Almeida Piva**

In the world of French entertainment in the early decades of the 20th century, the playwright and actress Gabrielle Bossis needed no introduction. Her charm, her verve, and an ineffable quality of her personality had already won over audiences in her homeland and promised her success abroad.

Gabrielle decided to dedicate herself to the performing arts in 1923, at the age of forty-nine, after an initial success with the young women of her parish, when she wrote and performed a play. Having perceived the blessing of Divine Providence in this fact, she resolved to use her talent to transmit a genuinely Catholic message to society from the stage. She wrote scripts with religious and moral content, made costumes, and played the main roles herself.

Far from indulging in the frivolity or worldliness that could be associated with the stage, Gabrielle made even greater progress in her spiritual life, as a result of the excellent Catholic upbringing she had received in childhood. Our Lord Jesus Christ had in her a humble servant, attentive to His divine will from childhood; and it was He who chose and prepared her to collaborate, through art, in His preeminent work: the salvation of souls.

Mystical relationship amid the active life

To crown this noble mission, the Saviour would later establish mystical conversations with her, in which He would reveal to her the tenderness of His love for mankind.

The first interior locution recorded by Gabrielle in her diary dates from August 22, 1936. She was aboard the transatlantic liner *Île de France*, which was taking her and her cast to Canada, when Our Lord spoke to her. “During the classical music concert,” she recounts,

“I offered Him, as if they were bouquets, the sounds and sweetness that emanated from it. He said to me gently, as He had done on another occasion: ‘*Ma petite fille* – My little daughter.’”¹

The next day, while a makeshift altar was being set up on a piano, and she was thinking about the seagulls and aircrafts that land on some ships, she heard: “This time it will be Christ,”² alluding to His imminent descent during the celebration of Holy Mass.

From then on, Gabrielle enjoyed a constant mystical communion with the Redeemer amidst the vicissitudes of her almost nomadic existence, which led her to cities in the Middle East and North America, as well as in northern Africa. The historian Daniel-Rops³ expressed admiration for the two facets of Gabrielle’s life: one, smiling, focused on others and dedicated to entertaining them; the other, deeply devoted to contemplation.

A unique vocation

Born into a wealthy family in Nantes, western France, on February 26, 1874, Gabrielle Bossis proved to be a shy and reserved child, although very inclined to communion with God. This inclination was gently encouraged by the Saviour Himself, as she came to understand years later, in an inner locution: “Do you remember that when you



To crown her mission, the Saviour would establish mystical conversations with her

Gabrielle as a Red Cross nurse in 1917

were little, I would say to you: ‘Tell Me what you did today’? But you did not believe it was my voice.”

As she grew up, Gabrielle overcame her shyness so as to do good to others and radiate joy. Her reticence gave way to vivacity, making her graceful and captivating, with distinctions in music, painting, and sculpture. She served as a Red Cross nurse during the First World War, in addition to dedicating herself to catechesis and the making of liturgical linens.

Feeling drawn by God to a unique mission, she refused numerous marriage proposals, as well as an invitation from a Franciscan priest to become a Poor Clare nun. Later, she became a tertiary of the Order of St. Francis, living in the world a life of celibacy, detachment, and penance.

In her youth, she was unjustly considered frivolous, but she suffered patiently in the secret of her heart, enduring, as she later recounted, great interior sufferings. Regarding these trials, Jesus communicated to her years later:

“Others judge us, and this judgment is wrong, because they only see the exterior; a person judges himself inaccurately, because he looks only his interior, without considering the example he gives. Only I know each soul with exactitude.”⁴

Jesus’ appeal to souls

In her drama apostolate, Gabrielle began to learn from Our Lord that intimacy with Him can be maintained even in the most absorbing circumstances. In a theatre in Algeria, for example, He asked: “Why do you speak to Me as though I were so far away? I am very near... in your heart.”⁵

Thus, as her relationship with Jesus intensified, she became a more docile and effective instrument in His hands to transmit to souls an appeal from His Heart: that *all* should cultivate with Him an intimate and continuous relationship, based on tender reciprocity to His infinite love – a communion that



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Far from being lost in the frivolity or worldliness that could be associated with the stage, Gabrielle made even greater progress in her spiritual life

Gabrielle (standing, with a white hat and dress) with her theatre troupe, in approximately 1927

is a prelude, already on this earth, to heavenly happiness.

Identifying Himself as a “Hunter of Hearts,”⁶ Our Lord encouraged Gabrielle to spread His appeal: “I have chosen you to witness how simple and joyful is the life of love, the language of love, the conversation of love”; And further: “Show that it is necessary to converse with Me. Do not leave Me alone in your hearts.”⁷

To make this message more widespread, Jesus asked her to transcribe the mystical conversations and publish them in a book. Thus, the words addressed to her would reach a multitude of souls, becoming a source of copious graces: “Ask that through this little book I may go about as I once did [on earth], healing and drawing people to Myself.”⁸

The first volume of her inner locutions was published anonymously in 1949, with a preface by the Bishop of Nantes, Dom Jean Villepelet. Today available in several languages, the work received from the author the evocative title: *Lui et moi* – He and I.

Faith, confidence and reciprocity

Throughout the seven volumes that make up this work by Gabrielle, Our

Lord’s invitation to intimacy is repeated like a refrain: “Speak with Me, my little soul. Speak with Me. And our hearts will merge. Is that not the aim of my Christians?”⁹

A particularly eloquent episode, which occurred during a meal, clearly manifests the Saviour’s eager desire to be invoked by souls:

“At the *Benedicite* I said: ‘My Love, bless my meal.’ [He answered:] ‘If only because you said “My Love,” I will bless it. Do you know that I am more sensitive than the most sensitive of men, and that your tender and child-like words have great power over my Heart?’”¹⁰

Throughout the centuries, the infernal enemy has sought in every way to make humanity believe that God identifies Himself with a severe and distant being, more or less attentive to world events and completely indifferent to the private lives of men. During a conversation on March 20, 1947, Jesus showed Gabrielle how opposed this mentality is to the feelings of His Sacred Heart: “When you give Me a token of your love, you fill Me with joy... If you only knew! I no longer feel a stranger, the ‘indifferent one’ that

I am to most men... Understand Me better. Speak your innermost words. I will place them like a bouquet of myrrh upon My breast.”¹¹

To grant the Redeemer this consolation, however, man must renounce the pursuit of spiritual progress based on his own merits and recognize himself as the object of gratuitous love. In short, he must allow himself to be loved, with humility and simplicity.

In another passage, Our Lord reveals that nothing wounds Him more than distrust and that indifference must be overcome with energy: “My intimate friends, why? Why do you not invoke Me more forcefully in your interior life? If your faith were less close to unbelief! If your hope counted on My help! And if simply your love loved Me more. I would preside over everything in your day, and when night came, your eyes would close again contemplating My face. Do you know how to fall asleep like that in My arms? Do you want to learn more? Remember that it is necessary to recommence the effort many times. It is necessary to try to grow. It is necessary to be very careful not to be satisfied with yourself. But often, contemplate your misery and tell Me about it, just as you know it. Then, how compelled My Heart will feel to help you, since you will be very small, very weak. When you call upon Me, do not fail to give Me the most tender names. I will recognize your voice.”¹²

Finally, to dispel any remaining doubts that might assail souls, the Redeemer addressed Gabrielle with new

words of encouragement. While she marvelled at the extraordinary speed with which the first edition of *He and I* had sold out, Our Lord intervened:

“Attribute this to my will, aided by that of the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of my Mother. And do you know what we are doing in writing these pages? We are dispelling the false idea that this intimate life of the soul is only possible for religious in the cloister. In reality, my secret and tender Love is for every soul that lives in this world. There is not one who does not have a mysterious yearning for it. And how

cret chamber of their hearts for my permanent abode! You can imagine what outpourings I would draw from their soul’s depths – there where so many things have been instinctively hidden, awaiting the coming of a friend worthy of their esteem.

“When they have understood that Christ, the Saviour, not only could be, but longed to be their unique Friend, this indescribable Friend, who begs and thanks; when they have glimpsed His joy at being welcomed by His creature – whom a false humility had kept at a distance – with what entirely new transports of enthusiasm do they fill their souls to the brim with love to honour the God who lives in them!”¹³

A message ever alive and relevant

After a life of faithfulness to God, marked by love for her neighbour, illuminated by hidden alms and countless sacrifices, hardships, and moral trials endured with joy, Gabrielle discovered advanced lung cancer which, after two months, ended her earthly life on June 9, 1950. Her grave is located in Le Fresne-sur-Loire, where the Bossis family had a summer home.

Her message of love and confidence in Jesus, however, remains alive and ever more necessary for the salvation of souls. May it find an echo in our hearts and transform our existence into a continuous act of gratitude and response to the torrents of affection that God bestows upon us at every moment. ✨



“In reality, my tender love is for every soul that lives in this world”

Gabrielle in her home in Nantes (France)

true it is that each one wants to find an example to follow and the means to achieve this.

“Ah! My daughter, what joy for Me and for you if at last all people became my faithful friends, trustfully calling for Me and offering Me the most se-

¹ BOSSIS, Gabrielle. *Lui et moi. Entretiens spirituels*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1983-1999, t.I, p.27.

² Ibid.

³ Cf. DANIEL-ROPS, Henri. Préface. In: BOSSIS, op. cit., t.II, p.9.

⁴ BOSSIS, op. cit., t.III, p.41.

⁵ Ibid., t.I, p.38.

⁶ Ibid., t.III, p.46.

⁷ Ibid., t.I, p.22.

⁸ Ibid., t.II, p.139.

⁹ Ibid., t.IV, p.21.

¹⁰ Ibid., t.II, p.64.

¹¹ Ibid., p.133.

¹² Ibid., t.IV, p.21-22.

¹³ Ibid., t.V, p.83.



Authentic and Faithful Witness

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

§2044 The fidelity of the baptized is a primordial condition for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the Church's mission in the world. In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance before men, it must be authenticated by the witness of the life of Christians. "The witness of a Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have great power to draw men to the Faith and to God."

This paragraph leads us to reflect on an essential point in the life of the Church: apostolic successes are not based on techniques, strategies, or human talents, but rather on the effects of grace in the soul of the apostle who, faithful to his configuration with Jesus Christ through Baptism, fulfils his mission.

In this context, a question arises: what is the mission of the Church? The Catechism itself answers: its mission consists fundamentally in evangelizing and being the universal sacrament of salvation¹ and, at the same time, in being "the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men."² For this reason, the "message of salvation" only becomes perceptible to men when corroborated by the "witness of life."

Conversely, nothing is more harmful to the "proclamation of the Gospel" and the "mission of the Church" than the infidelity of the apostle, whether by words or by behaviours that are discordant with faith and morals. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit (cf. Mt 7:18).

These teachings are based on the Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem* of the Second Vatican

Council, which emphasizes that "good works done in a supernatural spirit," that is, under the inspiration of grace, "have the power to draw men to belief and to God." This theme is extensively explained in the book *The Soul of the Apostolate*, by the Trappist abbot Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard.

In this work, it is demonstrated that no apostolic work is truly fruitful when devoid of interior life and the consequent union with God and devotion to Our Lady. Whoever embarks on evangelization without the support of grace and virtues receives sterility as a consequence.

As a remedy for this great evil, Dom Chautard indicates three essential points. 1. The apostolate must be the natural overflow of prayer, of the apostle's union with God. 2. The danger of the illusion of activism: the apostle who exhausts himself in external works, without interior life, becomes superficial and puts his own soul at risk. 3. The perfect balance lies in cultivating the interior life, without neglecting the work for the salvation of souls. In short, "we must never leave the God of works, for the works of God."³

The perfect model of this harmonious link between prayer and action was Our Lord Jesus Christ, who frequently withdrew to pray, and acted effectively in society. Let us ask Mary Most Holy, Queen of the Apostles, for the grace to have an excellent interior life and thus to be faithful to our baptismal vocation by bearing witness to God in this world. ✠



Success in the apostolate is rooted in the effects of grace in the soul of the apostle, who fulfils his mission by testifying with his life the message of salvation that he preaches with his lips

Preaching of St. Paul in Caesarea, by Alexandre Cabanel - Fabre Museum, Montpellier (France)

¹ Cf. CCC 849.

² CCC 780.

³ CHAUTARD, OCSO, Jean-Baptiste. *The Soul of the Apostolate*. Kentucky: TAN Books, 1946, p.7.



Fr. Matteo Ricci

Magazine archive



The Apostle of China

Bringing one of the greatest pagan empires to the Catholic faith was a colossal challenge for a Jesuit. Did he fulfil his mission?



✠ Sr. Michelle Tzu Yin Su

A young Italian lad, from an aristocratic family, had his heart set on a rather unusual dream. He aspired to nothing less than winning China over to the Lord! He envisioned that vast and mysterious empire, and his thoughts teemed with the physiognomies of the friendly Chinese people, whom he had perhaps only ever seen in engravings...

The Most High, who from His heavenly abode had inspired him with such longings in preparation for the future, would also provide for their realization.

Jesuit priests set out on a mission

Matteo Ricci was born on October 6, 1552. From an early age was eager to be a missionary and, at the age of eighteen, he joined the then-fledgling Society of Jesus. Shortly afterwards, he received the auspicious tidings: he and thirteen fellow members – amongst them the Italian Jesuit Fr. Michele Ruggieri, of whom we shall speak later – had been authorized to set off on a mission to Asia.¹

In May 1577, the new missionaries received the blessing of Pope Gregory XIII and, after spending a few months at the Jesuit college in Portugal while awaiting a ship, on March 24 of the fol-

lowing year they set sail for the East Indies.

Ricci completed his theological studies in Goa and, in 1580, was ordained a priest in the city of Cochin, to which he had been sent for health reasons. Having returned to Goa, in April 1582 he received orders to set off for the Portuguese colony of Macao, where he would join Fr. Ruggieri, who had arrived previously, and would prepare himself to evangelize the country by learning the Chinese language and familiarizing himself with the local culture.

Early successes, with persecutions

Then known as “the Middle Kingdom”, China was reputed to be a vast and mysterious territory. Before entering it, Ricci and his companions decided to adapt their appearance: they shaved their beards and hair, and replaced their black cassocks with grey tunics reminiscent of those worn by Buddhist monks. Thus, they presented themselves as “Western monks.”

Gradually, the Jesuits’ apostolate began to bear fruit. The governor of the city of Zhaoqing, named Wang P’an, gave the “worshippers of the Lord of Heaven” – as they were known – permission to build a house and a chapel.

As expected, the event attracted the hatred and machinations of the infernal enemy. An accident involving a child – who fell from a wall while watching the construction of the chapel – ended up generating false accusations of kidnapping. When the priests were brought to trial before Wang P’an, it was Fr. Matteo Ricci’s masterful defence that led to their acquittal.

However, although the Jesuits emerged victorious in this battle, the war against them persisted. So numerous were the obstacles to the Jesuit apostolate that in two years only twenty people had converted to Christianity...

Two companions depart...

Fr. Matteo Ricci faced further tribulations. In 1588, a directive arrived from Europe determining the return of Fr. Michele Ruggieri to Italy. Ricci would lose a valuable missionary companion, with whom he had spent the first years of his arduous apostolate.

Fr. Ruggieri is remembered as one of the main evangelizers of China, largely due to the numerous books he published during his mission. However, he always had great difficulty with the local tongue, while Fr. Ricci had a better command of the spoken and

written language. Thus, he actually had only a discreet, but essential, role in the writing of these texts.

To replace him, the Portuguese priest António de Almeida was sent, who fell ill and died not long afterward, at the age of thirty-four. His funeral, conducted with solemnity and with the honours due to the praise of one's ancestors, so highly regarded by the Chinese, caused a deep impression and even led to conversions.

Change of tactics

After Fr. Ricci had established his residence in the city of Chaozhou, a young scholar named K'iu T'ai-sou, who had abandoned his career to study Confucianism – the system of ideas of Confucius (551 BC - 479 BC) that values social harmony, reverence for elders, family customs and duties, as well as virtues such as justice – one day approached him, asking to be his disciple, desirous, above all, of learning the mysteries of Alchemy.

The Jesuit, who had brought much knowledge from the West, acquiesced without great enthusiasm; but, as time passed, the pupil himself was attracted to Religion and ended up converting to the Catholic Faith, becoming a dedicated follower of Fr. Ricci.

K'iu T'ai-sou advised his master to differentiate his appearance from that of the Buddhist monks – who, although respected, were discredited by the decadence of some – and to adopt the appearance of the sages. Ricci was somewhat reluctant, but, considering the apostolic fruits at stake, he finally agreed. He replaced his grey tunic with a dark blue silk garment, let his beard and hair grow, and began to wear his characteristic black hat. And it was not just his attire that changed; from that time on, he changed his signature to Li Ma-teu, an adaptation of his name combined with the surname of an ancient Chinese family.

This adjustment was decisive: in interacting with Confucianists, Ricci found a basis for explaining the truths

of the Faith with greater acceptance among the erudite, thus increasing the number of conversions.

“I am God”

Despite these consolations, the apostolate progressed at a slow pace. If such efforts were made, seeking solely glory of God, why did the Lord permit such difficulties?

During a river journey, travelling to Beijing to meet the Emperor, Fr. Ricci contemplated the panorama, immersed in aspirations and uncertainties, when a hand touched his shoulder and a voice spoke to him:

“So you want to travel this country and abolish the old religion to introduce a new one?”

Astonished, he turned to the one who touched him and asked:

“You know my secret! Are you God or the devil?”

“I am God!”

Father Ricci fell to his knees and exclaimed:



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The adjustment was decisive: in interacting with Confucianists, Ricci found a basis for explaining the truths of the Faith with greater acceptance among the erudite, thus increasing the number of conversions

“The cultural alliance between Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi” - Museum of China, Xangai (China); on the previous page, Matteo Ricci

“Lord, if You know my desires, why do You not help me?”

Without uttering a word, the Almighty made the Jesuit turn back around and showed him the following vision: a dazzling portal, flanked by tall towers, and bushes covering the banks of a river.

Ricci realized it was a grace that foretold that this was the place where his mission would succeed.

A short time later, for health reasons, he was forced to go to Nanjing, literally *capital of the south*.

When he arrived at the entrance to the city, he could not believe his eyes: he recognized the portal from the vision! By inspiration, he understood that from there God would fulfil the promise, even though until that moment he had only one disciple.

A debate with Buddhist monks

In Nanjing, many already knew Ricci and were not surprised by his change

in appearance, as they recognized him as a scholar. Even so, he faced debates, such as the one with Li-Pen-kiou, a renowned seventy-four-year-old Buddhist sage, accompanied by the famous Houang-San-hui and twenty-five other monks.

The elder invited Fr. Matteo Ricci to a banquet at his residence and, during the meal, proposed a debate on religion. The discussion alluded to the scriptural dialogues between Jesus and the doctors of the Law: despite their attempts to publicly discredit the Jesuit, the monks were unable to refute his arguments and withdrew humiliated after eight hours of debate!

There were also similar occasions in which, through divine protection and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Ricci always emerged victorious. Thus, his fame grew, providing the mandarins with an opportunity to accept the true Faith.

However, he had not yet achieved his main goal: to enter the Forbidden City – the complex of buildings of the imperial palace, located in the centre of Beijing, which no foreigner had ever entered – and speak with the Emperor.

To the royal palace, with a mechanical clock

Matteo Ricci was not only intelligent, but also very shrewd in achieving his goals. He then proceeded to commission several gifts from King Philip II of Spain, which would serve as a pretext to reach the Chinese sovereign.

After beginning their attempts, Fr. Matteo Ricci and his companion – a Spanish priest named Fr. Diego Pantoja – were detained for almost a year, victims of the envy of a eunuch. However, thanks to the intervention of friends, they finally managed to send the presents to the Emperor, who thanked them in writing.

Among the gifts, there was one that was unique. Fr. Matteo had perspicaciously devised a stratagem to guarantee an audience with the Emperor: aware of the Chinese fascination with the counting of time, he gave the monarch a valuable mechanical chiming clock, only wound sufficiently, however, to work for one day... When the clock stopped, as if by magic, the Emperor himself requested Ricci's return to the palace to “repair” the mechanism.



Through divine protection and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Fr. Ricci always emerged victorious. Thus, his fame grew, providing the Mandarins with an opportunity to accept the true Faith

Above, the first Chinese world map, drawn up by Matteo Ricci and his collaborators - National Library of China; at left, the Chinese version of Euclid's “Elements”, translated by the missionary, and a manuscript of the Portuguese-Chinese Dictionary compiled by Fr. Ricci and Fr. Ruggieri

Photos: Reproduction



Fr. Ricci's plans, inspired by grace, came to fruition. The Emperor was so impressed by the offering of the Jesuit priests that he wished to meet them personally

Panoramic view of the present-day Forbidden City, in Peking, at right, the Wanli Emperor, who received the missionaries in his palace

The plans, inspired by grace, came to fruition. The Emperor was so impressed by the offering that he wished to meet the Jesuit priests personally. The monarch's curiosity about the West, its customs, buildings, and landscapes was so great that he asked the priests to paint some European scenes for him.

These events promoted the missionaries' apostolate and allowed Christianity to take root in the Middle Kingdom.

Churches were erected and several Jesuit houses were founded, intended both for the sons of St. Ignatius from Europe and for the new Chinese Jesuit recruits. To record the mission, Fr. Matteo Ricci wrote in his native language the work *Della entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Christianità nella Cina*².

Last years of life

At fifty-six years of age, Fr. Matteo Ricci's hair and beard had already gone white; his countenance reflected the immense hardships he had undergone. Tireless, he never refused an opportunity to do good to souls, dedicating himself entirely to God, regardless of difficulties caused by age, fatigue, or illness.

Finally, on May 11, 1610, he uttered his last words, which proved to be a true prophecy: "I leave you before an open door with great merits, but not without many dangers and tribulations."

His death inspired respect among the Chinese and, to the amazement of all, the Emperor allowed his burial in Beijing, which was strictly forbidden to foreigners.

The Catholic Church triumphed in China!

As we briefly review the life of Fr. Matteo Ricci and consider, for a moment, the current reality in China, a question may come to mind: "The story is fascinating, but what was the outcome of it all? China never truly became a Christian country..."

In fact, so much effort seems to have failed to yield the fruits that were envisioned at the beginning of that apostolate, unless we analyse history from God's perspective. For Him, the value of Fr. Matteo Ricci's apostolic labours – as well as that of the souls saved through his intervention – is unimaginable, as it constitutes the fulfilment

of God's will concerning them. Thus, the faithfulness of those few is, in the eyes of the Lord, more precious than the rejection of the unbelievers.

Furthermore, who knows if, in the future, China will not become a daughter of the Holy Catholic Church through the efforts of new missionaries? Perhaps Providence is simply awaiting the opportune moment to pour out a new torrent of graces upon the "Middle Kingdom", reaping the fruits of the immolation of those who, in the past, gave of themselves without contemplating the flourishing of their apostolate.

Without hesitation, we can affirm that the Catholic Faith did indeed triumph on Chinese soil, through the sacrifice of those who bravely lived out the famous Jesuit motto: "*Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*"! ✨

¹ The historical and biographical information contained in this article were taken from the works: CRONIN, Vincent. *Matteo Ricci. Le sage venu de l'Occident*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2011; SPENCE, Jonathan Dermot. *O palácio da memória de Matteo Ricci*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1986; FÜLLÖP-MILLER, René. *Os jesuítas: seus segredos e seu poder*. Porto Alegre: Globo, 1946.

² "On the arrival of the Society of Jesus and Christianity in China".

Hope and Discouragement Clash in the Atlantic

The discovery of America is, paradoxically, remarkably famous, yet insufficiently understood in its details. Upon close analysis, we find that it was preceded by a sea of uncertainties and disappointments.

✧ José Arturo Peralta Concepción



The capture of Granada in January 1492 was the final exploit of the Spanish Reconquest. After eight centuries of war, it would seem that the time had come to rest.¹

It would seem so... if, in that same month of January, a navigator from Genoa had not appeared before the court of the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand II and Isabella, to present a daring plan: to sail to India by a new and potentially lucrative route. His name was Christopher Columbus.

At first, his proposal was rejected. Later, after respectful discussion, the sovereigns became interested in the undertaking. The only obstacle was that,

at the end of such a prolonged war, there was not enough gold to finance a voyage of such magnitude. However, Luis de Santángel, the royal treasurer, intervened and convinced the monarchs to advance the necessary funds. It was a risk – and a serious one!

The monarchs approved Columbus' plans and granted him everything they could to undertake the voyage... except for a crew. The navigator was obliged to recruit sailors from among the prisoners, promising them the royal favour of freedom. If they returned alive, that is... Several captives accepted the offer. They were not exactly the flower of humanity; but who else

would agree to embark on such a risky mission?

With the commander, the ships, and the crew gathered, everything was ready.

The adventure was about to begin...

The immense unknown

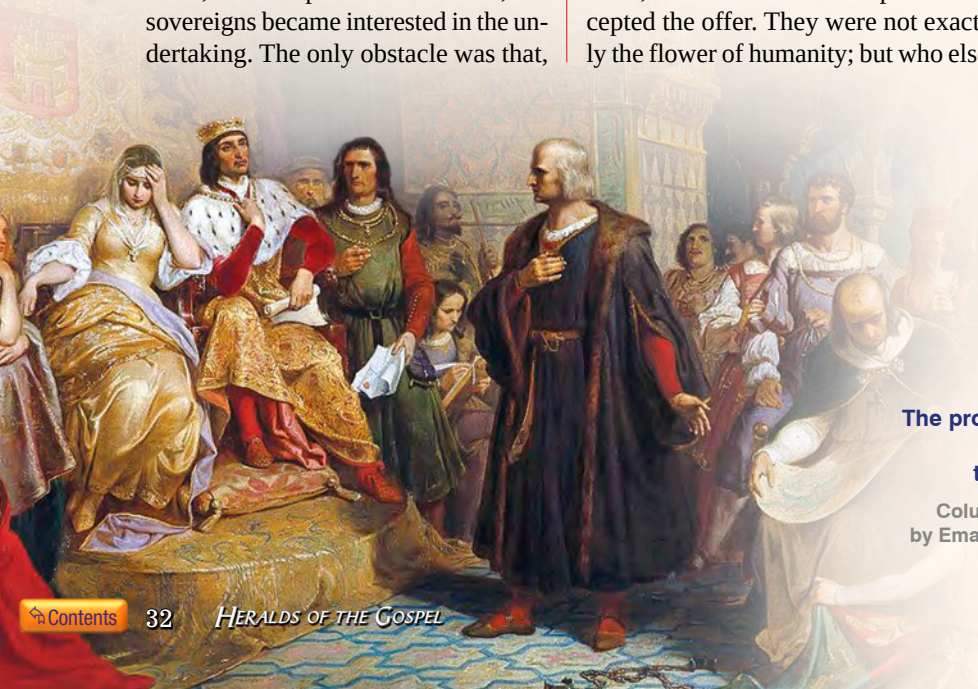
Columbus was about to embark on the greatest voyage of his life and one of the greatest epics in history. An adventure across the capricious ocean towards a mystery, along a route uncharted – even by human imagination.

Would he reach the long-expected India? No one knew. The possible consequences, however, were evident: death amidst the unknown, shame among his contemporaries, or a glory that would span the centuries.

On August 3, 1492, the fleet commander gave the order to set sail. The Santa Maria, the Pinta and the Niña, the three stately ships, propelled by the cool morning breeze, hoisted their

The proposal of Columbus was at first rejected. Only later did the sovereigns take an interest in the undertaking

Columbus before the queen and king of Spain, by Emanuel Leutze - Museum of Brooklyn, New York



sails one by one, upon which the triumphant cross spread its benevolent arms. Without a doubt, it was a grand day in Columbus' life.

He set sail. As the port receded, everything became water. The best of winds was blowing, and the three caravels looked like oaken swans sailing gracefully through the hitherto tranquil waters of the Atlantic. A profound calm and immense hope reigned aboard the vessels.

In the first few days, Columbus began to think about the immensity of his conquest, about what he would achieve if he were successful, or what he would never have if he were defeated by the insidious enemy they call the sea. He knew that everything he so longed for could be coming true at that moment; and what he feared as well.

He hoped that Providence would not abandon him. He also trusted in the veracity of the accounts associated with the East, that is, in the descriptions of the Venetian explorer Marco Polo and in the fantastic narratives of John of Mandeville.

Tragedy knocks at the door

A few days later, Columbus received news that the rudder of the *Pinta* had broken and that its repair would be prolonged. He then found himself in the predicament – some historians conclude – of making a stop in the Canary Islands. He wanted, it is true, to look for another caravel to replace the damaged one, but, finding nothing, he had to make do with the small ship and the time it would take to repair it. His ardent desire to reach India would have to submit to a month of waiting on dry land. After this delay, they set sail again westward, despite the unfavourable wind.



Magazine archive

Columbus was about to embark on the greatest voyage of his life and one of the greatest epics in history, navigating an uncharted route

Columbus' first voyage to America; inset, the Genoese navigator, by José de la Vega Marrugal - City Hall of Seville (Spain)



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Many sailors had heavy hearts in such an unprecedented situation: they were completely uncertain of their location, as well as the estimated time to sight land.

It was then that Columbus sought to alleviate the tension with promises based on estimates: he spoke of distances that, according to him, would need to be covered to reach their destination. But daydreams satisfy no one: "As they covered mile after mile, and as they spent day after day sailing across the endless sea, the obsession with glimpsing the Promised Land became ever more impetuous."²

Therefore, every sign of approaching land that appeared, whether birds or foliage in the water, caused a real surge of enthusiasm... which soon faded. They sailed in an endless desert of water.

When provisions and certainty began to run out, revolt became inevitable. The crew, made up of former prisoners, did not have the requisite discipline for such circumstances...

Columbus had to act firmly against the mutiny that was brewing. He gathered the sailors and reminded them of

all the benefits they would receive upon reaching their destination. He also tried to convince everyone that they were very close to it – although, in reality, they were only halfway there. To mitigate the conflict, he even threatened severe measures against the rebels.

How to keep hoping against hope?

Columbus' nerves were no less tense than those of the rest of the crew. The long wait was disheartening, and doubts kept creeping into his mind.

Would they really find land? What if the "promised land" was just a myth? What if it was all a deception, what to do with the crew? How to return if they were too far from port? And with water and provisions dwindling, how to avoid a tragic end?

Embittered by such thoughts, on September 25th Columbus called Alonso Pinzón, commander of the caravel *Pinta*, and asked if, according to the map, land should not have been sighted sooner. Pinzón agreed... Even so, neither dared to comment on the matter. The situation was, without a doubt, very serious.



When death, armed with thirst, hunger and plague, closed in on the explorers, when all seemed lost, victory burst forth like a geyser

The Landing of Christopher Columbus in America,
by John Vanderlyn - United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.

The only salvation was a miracle.

Land Ho?!

At dusk on that same September day, Pinzón shouted from the stern of the ship that he had sighted land. Upon hearing the news, many climbed the masts to get a better look. Others shouted and laughed with joy. Some fell to their knees and prayed to God in thanksgiving.

The admiral gave orders to sail in the direction indicated by Pinzón. After crossing more than fifteen leagues, they discovered that, after all, they had been deceived by a mirage.

Fatal discouragement assailed the sailors. They continued the voyage, but losing one by one the hopes of finding any meagre piece of land. Columbus, despite the setback, remained firm and confident.

A short time later, amidst generalized despondency at imminent death, a booming cannon shot rang out, awakening them from their inner lethargy: another sign that they had sighted land. They raised the flag and sailed as before, in search of what they had so longed for.

It was yet another frustration...

Unexpected Victory

Whatever the case, perhaps they were not so far from a safe harbour. Day and night they sighted birds flying, indicating the proximity of land, thereby bringing a little encouragement to Columbus.

On the night of October 11th, after the crew sang the *Salve Regina*, as usual, the Genoese explorer gathered everyone and, addressing them, thanked God for the safe crossing and for the "India" they had so eagerly hoped to find. And he wished to spend the night in vigil.

Two hours before midnight, a sailor thought he saw some shape moving on the horizon. He did not dare, however, to comment on it, to avoid false alarms. When dawn broke, he saw what he had so longed for and which confirmed all his certainties.

Land ho! The dry and blessed land they had so dreamed of! They were saved! Everyone rejoiced, singing the *Te Deum* at the top of their lungs.

Thus, after so many misfortunes, a new world unfolded before their eyes: the Americas.

It was the beginning of a new epic.

When all seemed lost...

The discovery of America is, paradoxically, remarkably famous, yet insufficiently understood in its details. The voyage undertaken by Columbus did not consist only of crossing the Atlantic: it also involved a long sea of trials, uncertainties and disappointments, at the end of which was a triumph clothed in particular beauty because, "when the expected victory arrives, it is very beautiful," commented Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, "but when the unexpected victory arrives, it is even more beautiful."³

This is the admirable adventure of the discoverers of America. Despite setbacks and even revolts, they knew how to persevere day after day, glimpsing behind each swell the longed-for land. When death, armed with thirst, hunger and plague, closed in on them, "when all seemed lost, victory burst forth like a geyser."⁴

This is the story of those who venture into the unknown towards the conquest of an ideal. For this is the divine way of writing the feats that, like Columbus', change the face of the earth: the greater the ocean to be crossed, the greater the storms tend to be; and the greater the hope sustained by the hero, the greater also is the radiance of the final encounter. ✧

¹ The historical information contained in this article has been taken from the following works: AZCONA, OFMCap, Tarsicio de. *Isabel la Católica. Estudio crítico de su vida y su reinado*. Madrid: BAC, 1964; BAKER, Nina Brown. *Cristóvão Colombo*. Porto: Civilização, 1962; IRVING, Washington. *Crónica de la conquista de Granada*. Granada: Miguel Sánchez, 1987; MADARIAGA, Salvador de. *Cristóvão Colombo*. Rio de Janeiro: Vecchi, 1944; SCHNEIDER, Otto. *Cristóvão Colombo*. São Paulo: Melhoramentos, [s.d.]; WALSH, William Thomas. *Isabel la Cruzada*. 4.ed. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1963.

² SCHNEIDER, op. cit., p.59.

³ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Talk*. São Paulo, 10/8/1991.

⁴ Ibid.

...the meaning of the word “amen”?

The word *amen*, derived from the Hebrew root אָמֵן (*’mn*), is related to the idea of firmness, truth, security, and confidence.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, for example, the people are admonished by Moses to respond “amen” (Dt 27:15-26) to the curses pronounced against those who violate God’s Law, thus manifesting their acceptance of divine justice. The prophet Jeremiah responds “Amen, O Lord” (Jer 11:5), when accepting a command from the Most High. The term appears on numerous occasions in the writings of the Old Covenant.

The Evangelists use the word in its Greek form – ἀμήν (*amen*) –, generally translated as *truly*.

With the force of authority, Jesus uses it at the beginning of solemn pronouncements. In the Gospel of John, the term is repeated to emphasize the revelation: “Truly, truly [*amen, amen*], I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (Jn 8:58). Our Lord uses this ex-

pression to testify that something deserves trust and full credit. Thus, the Apocalypse calls Him “Amen,” for He is “the faithful and true witness” (Rv 3:14).

In the Liturgy, the term acquires new splendour. Throughout the Holy Mass, the faithful pronounce it several times as a profession of faith. In receiving the Holy Eucharist, for example, “amen” expresses belief in the Real Presence after the minister proclaims: “The Body of Christ.” Finally, this word concludes and confirms our prayers, manifesting confidence in God and adherence to His designs.

May our lives also be a constant “amen,” witnessing our total fidelity to the Holy Church! ✦



The first “Urbi et orbi” blessing of Leo XIV, 8/5/2025

...that some religious habits were chosen by Our Lady?

Good Friday of 1239. Seven men were gathered when, in a mystical rapture, they had a vision of Our Lady. Although She shone with incomparable beauty, the Virgin manifested profound sadness. She had tears in her eyes, and wore a religious habit the colour of mourning. Numerous Angels surrounded her: some carried emblems of the Passion, another held a parchment with the words *Servants of Mary*.

Enthralled, those chosen souls listened to what Our Lady had to say to them: “See the habit that you will henceforth wear. Its black colour indicates the sorrows that I experienced, especially on this day, for the death of my only Divine Son.” The Mother of the Redeemer disappeared, leaving behind the habit and the mission of the Servite Order.

This is just one of several similar stories that occurred in the Middle Ages. Indeed, in a manner very similar to the episode narrated above, the habits of the Premonstratensians and Mercedarians were born, as well as the white cowl of the Cistercians and the scapular of the Carmelites and Dominicans.

In this way, Our Lady, in addition to establishing a link with these Religious Orders, also indicated how indispensable the use of appropriate attire is for those who enter the service of God.

If it is true that “the habit does not make the monk,” it is also evident that the habit, when worn by a religious faithful to his vocation, encourages the wavering, invites those who open themselves to grace to conversion, and is “a sign that will be opposed” (Lk 2:34) for unbelievers. ✦



Francisco Lecaros

Our Lady grants the habit of the Servite Order to the seven founders - Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, Cordoba (Spain)



Sergio Holmann

Heroic Sanctity or Heroism in Sanctity...

A man of flesh and blood, yet capable of flying, performing miracles, and mortifying his body with relentless penances... which of his examples can we imitate?



✠ **Thiago Resende**

Every saint is a hero... but not a “superhero”. This seems to be worth clarifying at the beginning of an article in which we intend to discuss the life of St. Peter of Alcantara, because people of our century are unconsciously accustomed to conceiving great works in the way they are presented in Hollywood films: an outstanding main character, for whom everything goes favourably and who ends his epic with a huge smile as the famous happy ending.

The most curious thing is that, not infrequently, this superhero encounters dramatic situations in which an unprecedented strength is revealed in him, superior to that of other mere mortals, which allows him to perform incredibly strenuous feats... without any suffering.

This is an erroneous and even dangerous view; but unfortunately very widespread, even in Catholic circles...

If we bear this in mind, it will be easier to understand that when, in the year 1499, the birth of a boy was announced in the village of Alcantara, Spain, it was not a superhero, but a son of Adam,

weak and sinful like us all, who came into the world. This newborn, however, aided by grace and crowned with countless sufferings, would become a great saint.

The boy, the youth, and the student

The name of this newborn was Juan. And, while it is true that he would live in the same century as the celebrated Juan of Austria, the victorious general of the Battle of Lepanto, it is no less true that he rivalled him, in his own way, in heroism.

Juan de Garavito y Vilela de Sanabria was the son of Catholic nobles, who knew the importance of instructing him in the Faith from childhood. This formation was of immeasurable value, for the young nobleman grew not only in age, but also in grace and sound convictions. His father, however, died very young.

As a young man, Juan entered the University of Salamanca. There, far from the common amusements of the youth of that time, the student’s recreation was to spend time in the pres-

ence of the Blessed Sacrament. In these silent colloquies, an uncertainty pursued him: what career to follow? He felt called to the priesthood; but should he be religious or secular? Conventual life greatly attracted him; However, like any human being, the glories of the world tempted him.

Although he consulted many holy men on the matter, none of them managed to appease his spirit. In the meantime, he returned to Alcantara for the summer holidays.

Finally, God answers his doubts

One day, once again at the foot of the tabernacle, Juan was praying. Perhaps he was asking the Lord what direction He desired for his life. Looking around, he saw two barefoot religious men, wearing brown habits and girded with a three-knotted rope. Anyone would have taken them for simple Franciscans. For Juan, however, they were God’s answer.

Moved by that breath of grace, the young student approached the friars and, opening his conscience, poured out the weight that oppressed him.

“Deus qui ponit pondus, supponit manum,” goes the Latin saying. Among those who heard his soul-searching narrative was Fr. Francisco Fregenal, superior of a Franciscan community. He was, therefore, precisely the one who could extend a hand and welcome him to the place that Providence had destined for him. As can be expected, the priest quickly realized it was a genuine and excellent vocation, and decided, without delay, to accept him into the friary at Manxaretes.

Leaving there, Juan de Sanabria rushed to settle his affairs in the world and, wishing to spare his family a commotion, left without warning. Everything was going very well, until his path was suddenly obstructed: there was a storm, and crossing the Tiétar River would be impossible for anyone... Anyone, except God!

Juan then implored the help of the Almighty and behold, for the first of many times, he began to fly!... After crossing the river and reaching the other bank, a whole life had been left behind; turning back was no longer an option for him.

Upon entering the friary, Juan de Sanabria “died” to give way to Friar Peter of Alcantara: a new man, with a new name, new apparel, a new home, and a new mission. This mission would soon become clear, for upon witnessing the troubles faced by the Franciscan Order, he understood what God was calling him to.

Between Observants and Conventuals

In the years following the death of St. Francis of Assisi, the Order of Friars Minor underwent numerous difficulties. A certain number of the religious were inclined to moderating the rule, especially regarding poverty. In fact, numerous concessions were made in this regard, such as those contained in the bull *Ad statum ordinis*, by Pope Martin V.

Over time, the rule was stripped of its original rigour in many points. A

necessary adaptation, some claimed, to better conform to the world of that time.

However, there was no shortage of souls who would fight for strict observance: “It was then that, convoked by Bernardine of Siena, John Capistrano, Albert of Sartiano and James of the Marches, ‘the four pillars of observance,’ as they were called, a movement takes shape which, without quarrels and without scandals, unites by free adherence all the friaries desirous to live Franciscan poverty integrally.”² These friars, supporters of the primitive rule, became known as observant; and those who adhered to the mitigated rule, as conventuals.

In the Extremadura region, when Friar Peter of Alcantara joined the Order, the Custody of the Holy Gospel was already formed, consisting of three friaries that remained from an attempted reform undertaken years earlier by Father Juan de Guadalupe. There, a spirit of greater austerity of life and a desire to faithfully fulfil the founder’s rule prevailed.

Some time later, the group of friaries that constituted the Custody of the Holy Gospel was elevated to the category of province, with the name of St. Gabriel, thus acquiring greater freedom of government within the Order itself. Friar Peter held various positions in this province until, in 1538, he was elected provincial minister. He then sanctioned constitutions of stricter observance and, to ensure their fulfilment, personally visited each of the houses.

After his term ended, the holy friar went to Portugal. There, he transformed the rugged Arrábida region into fertile ground for God. It was not without reason that the General of the Order, Friar John Calvo, was moved by seeing such heroism in those friars who lived in extreme conditions. That example was not only moving: it was above all attractive. To such an extent that one of the General’s companions, unable to resist, requested permission to remain there and, like him, many



Photos: Francisco Lecaros

A greater austerity of life and the faithful practice of the founder's rule were ideals cherished by St. Peter of Alcantara

From top to bottom: entrance to St. Peter of Alcantara's cell, refectory and kitchen of one of the monasteries that he founded, Pedroso de Acim (Spain); on the previous page, St. Peter of Alcantara - Museum of El Escorial, Madrid

others were fascinated by this radical form of dedication to God.

The reformer

After these initial experiments, Friar Peter decided to carry out the mission to which he felt inwardly called. He was not content with the “semi-radicalism” prevalent in the Province of St. Gabriel; he wished to reform everything according to the original source, that is, according to the ideal of the founder.

This yearning was enough for the waves of persecution to rise against him, and even for his superiors and those closest to him to consider him mad and discredit his initiative...

Discouragement, however, was not in his vocabulary. Walking in the footsteps of the *Poverello*, Peter of Alcantara went to Rome to present to the Successor of Peter his intentions regarding the Seraphic Order. He did so with his hands on the Gospels and, before that new Francis of Assisi, Paul IV supported the undertaking. To make his reform possible, the Pope detached him from obedience to the superiors of the local Observance – who opposed its rigour – and integrated him into the jurisdiction of the Conventuals, whose Minister General offered the support and freedom necessary for the implementation of the strict primitive rule.

It would be very ingenuous to believe that this would resolve all disagreements. In fact, returning to Spain and resuming his apostolate, now under the authority of the Conventuals, it

was not long before the General Commissioner of the Order in Spain summoned him to renounce his projects, accusing him of being “hypocritical, a visionary, reckless, exalted,”³ and a disturber of the peace in the province.

Overcoming these difficulties, that zealous friar accomplished a truly colossal work. New hermitages were founded, all animated by the radicalism

Spain and, on May 8, 1559, the brief *Cum a nobis* conferred upon him the power to found friaries, custodies, and provinces anywhere in the world, in addition to granting him the faculty to choose three judges, who would resolve the disputes arising from the reforms.

By 1561 there were already nine friaries, enough to justify the erection of the Province of St. Joseph and, with that, the drafting of the constitutions. Finally, in 1563, Pope Pius IV, with the bull *In suprema militanti Ecclesia*, linked the “Alcantarines,” as they were called, to the branch of the Observant Friars, of which they would constitute the most vigorous part in the following centuries.

Eminent holiness

Much more could be said about the hardships of this ardent reformer; however, there is something more important to point out: his moral character.

Considering that all successes in the life of apostolate are due to a well-lived interior life,⁴ history proves how much Friar Peter stood out in this regard. His power of attraction, the numerous friaries he successfully founded,

the miracles of conversion he performed in the confessional, all undoubtedly rested on an intense life of prayer, fasting, and penance.

How, however, to put this holiness into words? Perhaps the most faithful description is that of a saint who had the good fortune to know him closely: Saint Teresa of Avila, whose confessor was Friar Peter.



By means of an interior life marked by much humility, prayer, fasting, and penance, St. Peter of Alcantara obtained God's benevolence and achieved much success in his apostolic works

St. Peter of Alcantara hearing the confession of St. Teresa", by José García Hidalgo - Prado Museum, Madrid

that characterized him, and the Custody of St. Joseph was created.

The Saint of Alcantara's ideal triumphed, but the attacks intensified.

He decided to return to Rome to once again seek the help of the Supreme Pontiff. Supported by Paul IV, who recognized his eminent virtues, the reformer was promoted to General Commissioner of the Reformed Friars Minor of



According to the Carmelite reformer, for forty years St. Peter of Alcantara slept only an hour and a half a night. And, this sacrifice not seeming sufficient to him, he always slept in a sitting position, in a tiny cell – a little less than 4-feet wide! –, which denied him any comfort. His diet could not have been more austere. It was common for him to go three days without eating; sometimes, he would go up to eight days without satisfying brother body!

St. Teresa recounts: “Such was his mortification in his youth that, according to what he told me, he had spent three years in a house of his Order without recognizing any of the friars except by their voice, because he never raised his eyes. He did not know how to get to the places where duty called him, except by walking behind the other religious. The same happened to him on the roads. He never looked at any woman for many years.”⁵

A life of such penance and humility could not fail to attract the benevolence of God. As the Carmelite Saint relates, “his end was similar to his life, for he died preaching and admonishing his religious. When he saw that he was at his last, he said the Psalm: *Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi*;⁶ and, kneeling, he expired.”⁷

In numerous visions, St. Teresa saw him in heavenly glory.

Far removed from us?

Curiously, after finishing the account of the life of St. Peter of Alcantara, some readers may find themselves discouraged in the face of such extraordinary holiness. Indeed, discouragement

can easily take hold of a soul when it encounters an ideal that at first glance seems unattainable. However, this is not the correct perspective. It would also be erroneous to consider that such great austerity was the fruit of a “supernature”. On the contrary: it is certain that holiness cost him dearly.

There is another harmful conclusion to combat: that of thinking that, to be holy, we must all sleep, eat, dress, etc., exactly as the Franciscan Saint did – or did not ...

So, how should we proceed?

The answer is simple to formulate, although difficult to practise: we must do God’s will in our regard. Souls are different, and Providence has its own ways for each one. The Saint of Alcantara made this clear to his confidants when he forbade them from undertaking overly austere sacrifices – although they did not even come close to those he himself practised. What the Lord asked of him was not the same as what he expected of his brethren.

Even so, in this diversity of paths that lead to holiness, some elements will always be present: suffering, prayer, confidence and struggle. In different forms and with unequal measures, they are found in the life of every Catholic and, if well employed, lead to the heavenly homeland.

Worldly people might judge this to be too sad an existence. But the story of St. Peter of Alcantara offers us the opposite conclusion. Alongside the rigorous austerity he imposed upon himself, Providence granted him remarkable gifts that surpass any human enjoyment: countless ecstasies, ineffa-

ble consolations, a clear conscience of a mission accomplished – all these were like magnificent oases in his life.

Furthermore, his very presence became a support for others, among whom we highlight St. Teresa, for in a soul so united to Him, God can work in a supremely excellent way.

And there is something more, as Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira teaches: “Having the strength of soul to endure disappointments, slander, frustrations, in short, everything that man can suffer in life, is true heroism. It is foolish to imagine that only those who fight with weapons in hand are heroes. [...] We must understand that, in everyday life, we have opportunities to truly practise heroism.”⁸

This is precisely the lesson that the life of St. Peter of Alcantara offers us: when man renounces himself and puts himself entirely at the service of God, he becomes a true hero!

Patron Saint of Brazil

It was because of the testimony of so many virtues that this Spanish friar was canonized on April 28, 1669, and, due to the great devotion that the Emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro I, had to him, he wished to entrust his domains to such a glorious intercessor. Thus, since 1826, the country has had St. Peter of Alcantara as its Patron Saint.

May he act, therefore, in the nation entrusted to him and, with even greater impetus than that demonstrated in life, and fight so that the Land of the Holy Cross⁹ may respond to its calling and be inhabited by heroes worthy of the name of Christians. ✠

¹ From the Latin: “God, who imposes the weight, supports it with His hand.”

² PIAT, OFM, Estefânio José. *São Pedro de Alcântara. Patrono do Brasil*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1962, p.72. The biographical details contained in this article were taken from this work.

³ Ibid., p.78.

⁴ A doctrine expounded by Jean-Baptiste Chautard (1858–1935), Trappist abbot of Sept-Fons, in his famous book *The Soul of the Apostolate*, written during a trip to Brazil and which became Pope St. Pius X’s bedside book.

⁵ ST. TERESA OF JESUS. Livro da Vida, c.XXVII. In: *Obras Completas*. 3.ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1961, t.I, p.215.

⁶ “I was glad when they said to me, [Let us go to the house of the Lord],” the first words of Psalm 122.

⁷ ST. TERESA OF JESUS, op. cit.

⁸ CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plínio. São Pio V, herói em meio às angústias! [St. Pius V, a Hero Amid Tribulations]. In: *Dr. Plínio*. São Paulo. Year XIV. No. 164 (Nov., 2011), p.24.

⁹ The name given to Brazil upon discovery by Portuguese explorers.



“To live is to be together, to look upon and to love one another”

Following her son’s long stay on the European continent, Dona Lucilia, moved by how keenly she felt his absences, would express a new concept of living.

✠ Msgr. João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, EP

On June 29, at 10 in the morning, Dr. Plinio boarded in Paris, headed for Brazil. He had not given Dona Lucilia his exact return date, to spare her, once again, “the anguish of the crossing.”¹

As soon as he arrived in Rio, he asked that his mother be informed so he could speak with her on the phone. After close to two long months of absence, she and her beloved son were able to have a long “chat.”

“Filhão, thank God, you are always the same!”

On the following morning, Dona Lucilia ignored her doctor’s advice to

rest longer, in order to make ready to receive her son. She had a hearty snack prepared to be served to him as soon as he arrived, to restore his energy, as he would certainly be weary from his trip.

When everything was ready, she sat in the entrance hall of the apartment to await him. What immense joy inundated her soul when she saw him appear in the doorway. Embraces, kisses, and blessings were the first manifestations of her joy.

Always true to herself, she did not fail to counterbalance her elation with her unflagging vigilance.

After these affectionate greetings, Dona Lucilia stepped back a bit and looked at her son attentively, with her serene but penetrating gaze. At first Dr. Plinio did not understand the reason for this, but waited and said nothing.

Following a few moments of scrutiny, she concluded with satisfaction:

“Filhão, thank God, you are always the same!”

Everyone then proceeded to the dining room, where Dr. Plinio related his first impressions of the trip while he ate the tasty snack prepared for him.

Dona Lucilia had a virtuous concern for her son’s perseverance, which grew, together with her esteem for him

Dr. Plinio on a trip to Europe, in 1950

The apprehensions of a vigilant mother

Dona Lucilia’s touching attitude reveals not only that her virtuous concern for her son’s perseverance did not wane over the years, but rather that it grew, together with her esteem for him.

Notwithstanding knowing him so well, and being sure he was “the best of sons,” she had no illusions about human nature. Therefore, she would never think, “Since Plinio is such a good son and such an exemplary Catholic, there will be no risks for him in Europe; I may rest entirely assured.”

Her vision of reality was more apt to lead her to think, “It is true that he is a good son, but, like any other man, he can fall. Europe is a continent of seduction and pleasure. He is taking a fair amount of money to spend, and his life in Europe will be very different from here in Brazil. He will eat at fine restaurants, stay at excellent hotels, and will lead a busy social life, frequenting lofty social circles. In museums, he will see many works of art that are decent, but also others that are not. What will cross his sight and his imagination during his travels? Will this old Europe, which he and I admire so much, return my son to me the way he left, or will it leave his spirit marked for the worse?”

These apprehensions, accumulated over the two months since his leaving, were dispelled with this instan-



taneous analysis, carried out, to be precise, much more by the heart than the eyes.

Now, at least, she would have the comfort of her son's presence. He had so much to tell her about what he had seen in Europe – the marvels of France, the splendours of Rome, the glories of Spain, the charms of Portugal.

However, she would not be able to spend much time in his company. After two months, a friend from another Brazilian state proposed that Dr. Plinio come to work on a project which, in his view, could benefit the Catholic Cause.

Yet another separation

Dr. Plinio did not hold out high hopes for the success of the project, but acquiesced on account of their friendship. These new activities demanded his presence out of state for some time, and accordingly he left in September.

Dona Lucilia faced a new conflict: She wanted her son to succeed, and prayed ardently for this; but, simultaneously she was concerned that if he did succeed, this would inevitably necessitate that he prolong his stay.

Nevertheless, she was disposed to make any sacrifice for the demands of the apostolate. In a letter she sent Dr. Plinio, her words of counsel, seasoned with wisdom, are worthy of note; in them, sentiment gives way to reason.

São Paulo, 28-IX-950

Beloved Son!

Today I went to the Church of St. Anthony, where I received Holy Communion and prayed a great deal for you, so you will fare very happily (...) and may return soon. How our home becomes lifeless and ugly without you! But also, when you come, spring arrives!

Rosée has come frequently, and yesterday, in a "vol d'oiseau,"² Maria Alice was here. I think you and [your friend] must be very tired with this work (...), and therefore it would



For Dona Lucilia, it was a great suffering to have little contact with her son, for "to live is to be together, to look upon, and to love one another"

Dona Lucilia at the end of the 1950s

be good for [him] and you to come to rest a bit.

After finishing this letter, I intend to go to a movie, to later retell the plot to my beloved son.

As great as my saudades may be, I advise you not to return until you know the result [of the work] there; otherwise, it may seem slighting. When we undertake to do anything, we should do it well and take it to the end. Patience, patience, beloved! Give my affectionate greetings to [your friend].

Well, dear, enough chitchat for today.

With my blessings, I send you many kisses and hugs.

From your devoted mother,
Lucilia

"To live is to be together, to look upon and to love one another"

As Dr. Plinio had feared, groundwork for the project had not been sufficient to obtain results, and he therefore decided to return at once to São Paulo, to the delight of Dona Lucilia.

Even before he informed his mother of the mission's outcome, his friend,

who had come as well, at her invitation, told her in jest that everything had gone well. He thought she would be very pleased, but received only a polite but dispassionate response.

Dr. Plinio took note of Dona Lucilia's reaction. When alone with her at the time of their chat, he inquired in a filial tone:

"Mãezinha, did you believe him when he told you everything had gone well?"

She replied:

"Yes."

"I was surprised you did not seem the least bit happy about it."

She then explained:

"Well, you see, if you had been successful, you would have been obliged to move far away from home and would only be able to come here infrequently. And we would have so much less time to enjoy each other's company. That would be a great suffering for me. My son, to live is to be together, to look upon and to love one another..."

"To live is to be together, to look upon and to love one another..." These beautiful, luminous words superbly summarize what could be called the "Lucilian" way of life. ✧

Taken, with minor adaptations,
from: *Dona Lucilia*.
Città del Vaticano-Nobleton: LEV;
Heralds of the Gospel, 2013,
p.468-472

¹ Born in the 19th century, Dona Lucilia drew on her experiences as a young woman to assess the dangers of an ocean crossing. And these were only heightened at the prospect of an aeroplane voyage! She still had vivid memories of the days when aviation was in its infancy, and fatal accidents were commonplace. And even in 1950, she would have found no comfort in the fact that intercontinental flights had become routine and safe.

² French for: "flight of a bird," used figuratively to mean "in passing," "very briefly."



Stephen Nami

Stephen Nami



Photos: João Paulo Rodrigues

Joinville (Brazil) – On August 14, Archbishop Francisco Carlos Bach, Metropolitan of Joinville, presided over the Mass of dedication and blessing of the altar in Our Lady of Triumph Oratory, entrusted to the Heralds of the Gospel. The Mass was concelebrated by numerous priests from the archdiocese and the institution.



Photos: Sergio Céspedes

Aparecida (Brazil) – The 16th National Pilgrimage of the Shrine Apostolate, “Mary, Queen of All Hearts” to the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida began on August 7 with a Mass celebrated by Metropolitan Archbishop Mário Antônio da Silva, in the old basilica. The following day featured the recitation of the Rosary at the Benedict XVI Tribune (photo 1) and the closing Eucharistic Celebration, presided over by Bishop Benedito Beni dos Santos, Emeritus of Lorena (photos 2 and 3).

Where Can Truth Be Found?

“Church: The Teacher of Truth” was the theme of the Thomistic Congress held on August 7 and 8 at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary complex in Caieiras (SP), and that of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Embu das Artes (SP). Daily Eucharists, conferences, workshops, roundtables, and musical performances, interspersed with pleasant fellowship, were part of the intense programme.

Thomistic thought concerning truth – considered in its relation to contemporary philosophy, to psychotherapy, to the virtue of charity, and to human life, among other perspectives – as well as the teaching mission entrusted to the Church, were some of the topics covered. Among the speakers was Fr. Ignacio Andereggen, professor at several pontifical universities.



Photos: Stephen Nami



Roberto Cochrowski

Brazilian Army and Air force – In August, the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary visited the Aeronautical Technology Centre in São José dos Campos (SP), for a Holy Mass followed by a concert (photos 1 and 2). A musical performance prepared by the Heralds of the Gospel also marked, on August 19, the celebrations for the 156th anniversary of the founding of the Dom Pedro II Battalion of the Brazilian Army, at the Cathedral of Petropolis (photo 3).



Stefano Gavilanes



Juan José Villena

Ecuador – In the months of July and August, the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary visited the town of Puerto Limón (photo 1), as well as the Southern Naval Base of the Ecuadorian Navy, to bless the ships of the corporation and their crews (photo 2), along with the St. Joseph Calasanz Educational Centre (photo 3), both in Guayaquil.

Photos: Chris Coutinho



India – Holy Family Church in Bangalore became too small to accommodate the six thousand members of the faithful who gathered there, eager to venerate the Pilgrim Statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary during her visit to the parish. On August 8, the thousand Hail Marys were recited to Our Lady, and on the 9th, Holy Mass was celebrated.

Photos: Alejandro Costantini



Argentina – On July 22, Our Lady of Montserrat Parish, in Buenos Aires, received the “schola cantorum” from Our Lady of Fatima Church in Tocancipá, Colombia, for a musical performance, preceded by the celebration of Holy Mass and the solemn crowning of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Statue.

Paraguay Celebrates its Patroness

Members of the Heralds of the Gospel actively participated in the commemorations in honour of Our Lady of the Assumption, in Paraguay. On August 5, there was a procession to transfer the image of the Blessed Virgin from her chapel in the National Pantheon of Heroes to the Cathedral of Asunción (photos 1 and 2), followed by a Holy Mass presided over by Cardinal Adalberto Martínez Flores, Metropolitan Archbishop (photos 3 and 4). On the eve of the ceremony, a statue of the Patroness was inaugurated on the capital's main avenue, with

the presence of the Cardinal Archbishop, the Apostolic Nuncio to Paraguay, Archbishop Vincenzo Turturro, and the President of the Republic, Santiago Peña Palacios, accompanied by the first lady and by his cabinet (photos 5 and 6). On this day, the vigil Mass, celebrated by Archbishop Turturro, was attended by a delegation from the St. Isidore the Farmer Parish, in the city of Limpio, entrusted to the Heralds (photo 7). The solemn procession and Eucharist on August 15 were presided over by Cardinal Martínez Flores, at the cathedral (photo 8).



Photos: Preetham D'Silva

Presidência da República do Paraguai

Francisco Espinola



Chambord Castle

The Magnificent Twilight of the Middle Ages

Marcelo Ferreira

Of this incomparable and mysterious castle, no construction plans remain, its architect is unknown, and even the reason for its construction is unclear. But it is possible to unveil part of the secret.

✠ Daniel Restrepo Estrada



On the banks of the Cosson River in France stands the imposing Château of Chambord. The sprawling plain, the surrounding woods, the reflecting waters – all contribute to create a fitting setting for the palace, which transforms the panorama into a true jewel.

The castle seems like a balm to the human spirit in its search of the marvelous. For this reason, numerous travelers flock there to contemplate it. The diversity of origins of the visitors is accompanied by different states of spirit.

There are those – the majority – who simply wish to satisfy their curiosity. Others, on the contrary, flock there attracted by the historical and architectural enigmas that pervade the building. Finally, there are also souls who see in the castle a relic of Christian Civilization and visit it as if on a pilgrimage. In any case, what they encounter is a mystery.

A dream of extraordinary dimensions, in stone

The castle, in effect, is fascinatingly mysterious. No construction plans remain, nor are the reasons that led Fran-

cis I to build this beautiful and sumptuous edifice known. However, thanks to the investigations of researchers, it is possible to unveil part of the secret.¹

In the year of Our Lord 1515, the son of Louise of Savoy, Francis I, only twenty years old, ascended to the throne of France, after his cousin Louis XII died without leaving a direct heir. Glory and prestige surrounded him, and his imposing figure personified his power.

Despite the weight of the sceptre, his passion for hunting led him to the deepest woods in the Loire Valley. Among the forests and marshes of the region, Chambord was his favorite place, due to its distance from the world and its cares. The place perfectly fulfilled his aspiration to create, in stone, a work of extraordinary grandeur. Eager to build a hunting castle there, the king ordered the construction to begin in 1519, which would be completed in just thirty years.

If we consider the splendour of the building, its complexity, and its apparent uselessness – after all, it was nothing more than an inn for chases through

the forest – the speed of construction is still astonishing and raises certain questions. What is the “prehistory” of the castle? What other motives lay behind those walls? What genius conceived it so readily?

Legacy of a glorious past

Anyone attempting to answer the first of the questions above is immediately faced with a practical difficulty: the main documents about the construction of Chambord disappeared in the 17th century... We are left only with fragments, such as this short mention in a letter from Francis I: “Some time ago – wrote the king – we began the construction of a beautiful and sumptuous building in the place called Chambord, near our city of Blois.” Thus, to decipher some of the initial steps of its history, we are left with only one complete, solid, and enigmatic document: the castle itself!

The first of these lies submerged beneath the waters of the moat. Recent archaeological studies have discovered traces of an earlier construction there. The famous Chambord palace

would then have been built upon the foundations of another castle. What would it have been like? In the library of Blois, there are three documents that shed light on the subject: two refer to a building in that area, and the third – a document signed by Louis XII, Francis' immediate predecessor at the site – indicates that there was a dwelling there worthy of a king of France.

On one of his hunting expeditions, Francis I probably saw the castle, isolated and erected among the marshes, as if to represent the medieval spirit already in advanced extinction. The ancient feats of chivalry, the heroism of yesteryear, the pilgrimages to Jerusalem that had so honoured the name of France: all these glorious memories seemed to perpetuate themselves in the medieval fortress. Driven, then, by nostalgia for that fabulous world, the monarch wanted to materialize this dream in a magnificent building. It is no coincidence that Chambord retains aspects of a feudal castle, complete with towers and a moat. And, while perpetuating the past, the king also aspired to attain even more majestic heights.

We have unveiled at least a part of the mystery. We know it is a child of medieval Christendom and the longing the King of France had for it. Let

us continue to “read” the castle, hoping to find a few more pieces of the puzzle.

Harmony and asymmetry

If we enter through the main door, we are immediately surprised by an unprecedented and ingenious architectural feature. The main hall is dominated by a rather conspicuous central staircase. The building revolves around it, with its two independent and intertwined flights of stairs – designed in such a way that those going upstairs do not meet up with those going downstairs. After several investigations, it was concluded that all spaces are symmetrical in relation to this single model, the base of the central staircase. It is the backbone of the colossus.

Despite this principle of cohesion and order, there is a peculiar “incoherence” observed in the castle. All the façades are different. How to explain such asymmetry in a building of such evident harmony?

Initially, it was believed to be nothing more than a mistake during construction. However, upon analysing the plan, it was discovered that the “error” is more serious than it appears at first glance. The castle's own plan presents seemingly absurd anomalies. Looking at the plan, the four

rooms distributed on each floor have the same orientation, except for one. It follows that the number of balconies is different on each façade.

We must therefore assume that there was an initial plan that was not followed. The Chambord we know is not the same as the one that was planned. What should it have been like?

Architects have recently strived to find the formula that would remedy these incongruities. And they found it. It would be enough to make the building's plan rotate entirely in the same direction, like a large helix, with the staircase as the axis. The rooms would be symmetrically arranged, all the façades would be identical, and everything would become harmonious.

The errors would only be the result of adaptations to facilitate the circulation of visitors. The architect did not have this practical concern. His intentions were much more artistic. And this consideration leads us back to a question already raised above: what genius conceived the castle? Let us go back a few years in history.



Chambord Castle, an offspring of medieval Christendom and the longing the King of France had for it, emerges like a balm to the human spirit in its search of the marvellous

At left, aerial view of the Castle of Chambord (France); above, the central staircase of the edifice. On the previous page, a view of the northwest façade

And the architect?

Newly crowned, Francis I reconquered the Duchy of Milan. While there, he took the opportunity to admire some Renaissance marvels and personally meet one of the great masters of the time: Leonardo da Vinci. And, shortly afterwards, the plans for the Chambord castle emerged... Curious.

Da Vinci was interested in buildings surrounded by landscape, in centralized plans, in staircases with several revolutions. But in all these preferences, which he left sketched in his notebooks, one perceives the aspiration for an architecture of perfect coherence. It even seems like a pre-description of Chambord, which, moreover, has unmistakably Italian touches.

Considering these coincidences, could Leonardo da Vinci himself have been the architect of the castle? There are strong indications in this regard. Such an original and ingenious building would hardly have emerged without the hand of the famous artist, then residing in France. If he was not the mastermind, it seems at least unlikely that he remained uninvolved in the work, given that the plans were drawn up whilst he was still alive, albeit for only a short time. He died shortly before the start of construction, at the age of sixty-seven, leaving its execution to others.

To whom? Another mystery. We only have one reference: in a financial

record of models of the castle, the name of Domenico de Cortone appears, one of the numerous Italian artists of the court. It is therefore assumed that he was responsible for realizing Da Vinci's dream in stone... and also for introducing the modifications to the original plan and the irregularities already mentioned. Contingencies to be expected when one inherits the work of a genius.

If it is true, however, that the mentor abandoned the idealized work, there is someone who never ceased to follow the realization of the prodigy, and to project his ideals onto it: the king himself. A unique obstinacy led him to continue such a financially burdensome construction, despite the adversities that soon pervaded his reign.

In 1519, Charles V became emperor. Francis I, in addition to not being able to secure the crown of the Holy Roman Empire for himself, would later lose the Duchy of Milan to his Spanish rival. In an attempt to recover this territory, in 1525 the King of France was wounded and captured. The castle's construction was apprehended with its lord...

Only upon returning from captivity was Francis I able to continue the project, abandoned for fifteen months.

Chambord emerges from the earth, grand and paradoxical.

A paradox, a mystery, a symbol

Paradoxical, yes, and for many reasons. First, because of the palace's lo-

cation: the silhouette of this fairy-tale castle is outlined on a swampy terrain. The construction, in turn, is visibly inspired by medieval castles from the late 14th century, while still incorporating certain typically Italian features. Thus, it is a profoundly unique construction, due to its great features that are simultaneously feudal and characteristic of the Renaissance.

But perhaps this is not the main mystery surrounding it. A symbol of the reign of Francis I and his astonishing persistence in completing the greatest architectural work of his life, Chambord presents a huge disproportion between the efforts expended in its construction and the practical outcome resulting from them. It is conjectured that, in total, the king spent only a few weeks of his reign in the castle. The numerous rooms intended to house the court were almost always empty of inhabitants and furniture. Only when the king decided to live there for a few days was a minimum of furniture and artistic treasures brought into the apartments. How, then, to explain the monarch's insatiable thirst for perfection?

Only one reason explains it: Chambord was not built to provide accommodation, but to serve as a symbol. The King of France wished to erect an emblem.

Thus, we must ask: an emblem of what?

How can the mysteries surrounding Chambord be explained? The castle was not built as a residence, but rather as a symbol: Francis I desired to erect an emblem of a sunset

View of the castle at dawn; inset, portrait of Francis I, by Jean Clouet - The Louvre, Paris



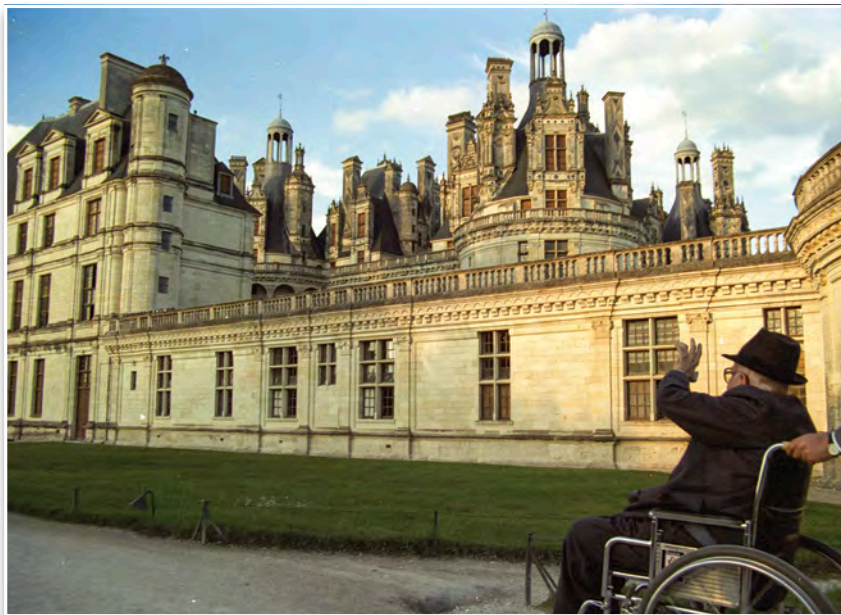
The avenged sunset

October 14, 1988. Perhaps for the first time, the ancient castle of Francis I received not a visitor, a tourist, or a historian, but a pilgrim. Dr. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira approached the building, not only for the delight of seeing it, but above all for the love of Christian Civilization, of which the monument was an expression.

Chambord, he commented, is one of the most distinguished castles in the world, of unexpected perfection, in which Heaven dominates the earth, faith dominates concrete life, and spirit dominates matter. In it are condensed the “remnants of the grace that blew over Europe and gave rise to the Middle Ages, setting centuries later, slowly, like a splendorous sun,”² as “one of the radiations of that sunset of medieval Civilization, a magnificent sunset, as magnificent as Christendom.”³ Dr. Plinio was then able to contemplate that marvel closely.

The pilgrim lingered for quite some time near Chambord, at times praising the beauty of the building, or that of the twilight on that cold autumn afternoon. However, at a certain point, those present noticed, from his expression, that something very sublime was occurring. As he contemplated the castle framed by the colours of the sunset, Dr. Plinio seemed to enter a mystery, glimpsing a perfection that transcended the palace itself.

Months later, questioned by his spiritual children, he lifted the veil of this mystery some degree. He confessed that it was, in fact, a mystical experience he had had, in an angelic manner. And, to everyone’s astonishment, he told the words he had heard within him: “This is abandoned, it has been transformed into an empty skel-



Magazine archive

“Although the castle was not made by God directly, He may have inspired, aroused in men the desire to build Chambord, corresponding to an Angel of Chambord that He has and sends there”

Dr. Plinio contemplates Chambord Castle in October of 1988

eton without flesh. [...] I show myself to you thus. Resurrect me and avenge me!”⁴ Who could the illustrious visitor who instilled in him such inspirations be? An Angel? The enigma of Chambord remained undecipherable...

He would later utter these inscrutable words, just a year before his passing: “Nothing interests me as much as a certain spirit that emanates from the Château of Chambord; it is more beautiful than the château itself and could be an Angel. Although the castle was not made by God directly – He is only the first cause – God may have inspired, aroused in men the desire to build Chambord, corresponding to an Angel of Chambord that He has and sends there.”⁵

Everything leads one to believe that, for the first time in history, a man had unveiled, at least in part, the mysteries

surrounding the emblematic castle: its unusual location, the insistence of the knight-king on completing a masterpiece almost devoid of practical purpose, the anonymity of its architect, the perfection of its proportions, its immeasurable beauty. Where neither historians nor scientific research could attain, inspiration came when it pleased God that a dialogue should begin between a man of faith and the “spiritual architect” of one of the most beautiful castles in the world.

From then on, Chambord ceased to be a mystery in the eyes of men. It became a plan. Yes, a divine and providential design; fulfilled when a respectable man, advanced in years, was able to read something that documents do not convey and discern supernatural values that transcend the stones of a building. ✧

¹ The historical information contained in this article was taken from the documentary *Chambord. Le château, le roi et l’architecte*, by Marc Jampolsky.

² CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. Magnífico crepúsculo da Idade Média [The Magnificent Twilight of the Middle Ages]. In: *Dr. Plinio*.

São Paulo. Year II. No. 12 (Mar., 1999), p.33.

³ Idem. Combati o bom combate [I Fought the Good Fight]. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo.

Year XI. No. 129 (Dec., 2008), p.28

⁴ Idem. *Talk*. São Paulo, 17/4/1994.

⁵ Ibid.



Six letters, whose authors are presented below, demonstrate the transformative power of the Catholic Faith in the souls who, made children of God through Baptism, sit “with the princes of His people” (Ps 113:8).

✚ Dcn. Gabriel Borges Bonfim Silva, EP



In a previous article,¹ a challenge was launched to readers: to discover the author of the letters pictured once again on these pages.

The first revelation will undoubtedly override all initial hypotheses: the letters are not written in Portuguese, nor in English, nor in French or Dutch, but... in Old Tupi! For almost four centuries, these six manuscripts have been kept at the Royal Library of the Netherlands, in The Hague, and were translated by the philologist Eduardo de Almeida Navarro, with remarkable merit, only in 2022.² It is to be hoped that the important historical context surrounding them will be known by a large part of Brazilians.

In 1624, the Calvinist Dutch, financed by the Dutch West India Company, attempted to invade Bahia and were repelled by a joint military force of Portugal and Spain – called the Luso-Spanish Armada – the following year. During this period, however, they had established relations with some of the indigenous people of Paraíba, the

Potiguara – *poti uara*, in Tupi, *shrimp eaters*. Pedro Poti, along with twenty other indigenous people, left with the Dutch, abandoning the Catholicism in which they had been baptized and becoming radically Calvinist.

For the other Potiguara, this signified a grave betrayal of their people, of the Portuguese, and above all of the Catholic Faith – embraced by their parents – and reconciliation would only be possible, to some extent, when the conflict culminated on the battlefield.

Five years later, the Dutch attacked the Captaincy of Pernambuco and conquered a large part of the northeastern coast, beginning twenty-four years of occupation. On June 13, 1645, the rebellion against Dutch rule began. Episodes marked by religious persecution and violence – such as the massacres of Cunhaú and Uruaçu, in present-day Rio Grande do Norte – intensified the break, and consolidated the resistance.

Among the commanders of the insurrection were João Fernandes Viei-

ra, André Vidal de Negreiros, Antônio Dias Cardoso, Henrique Dias, son of African slaves, and Felipe Camarão. The latter was a Potiguara who had been invested with the title of captain-major of all the Indians.

It is in the context of this climax of history that our six letters are situated, dated from August 19 to October 21, 1645. Three of them are from Felipe Camarão. The authors of the other letters are Captain Simão Soares, Diogo da Costa, and Diogo Pinheiro Camarão. These missives share the same objective: to convince their recipients – especially Pedro Poti, who acted as an interpreter and mediated indigenous alliances – to abandon the enemy camp and return to their families and to the true religion.

They stand out not only for their distinctive handwriting, but above all for the nobility of sentiment and the depth of faith that permeate the text. The solemn and affable introductions are reminiscent of the epistles of the Apostle



Photos: Reproduction

Above, letter from Antônio Felipe Camarão to Antônio Paraupaba, from October 4, 1645; at right, the signature and portrait of the missive's author - Pernambuco State Museum, Brazil. On the previous page, from left to right: letters from Diogo Pinheiro Camarão and Diogo da Costa to Pedro Poti, from October 21, 1645 and October 17, 1645, respectively. In the background, "Battle of the Guararapes", by Victor Meirelles - National Museum of Fine Arts, Rio de Janeiro

St. Paul. The delicacy of expression resembles that of St. John the Evangelist:

"May God Himself come with my little letter for your salvation, O my little brother Pedro Poti," began the Indian Diogo da Costa. The concern is, above all, for the eternal salvation of his brother. Further on, he poignantly appeals to fraternal ties: "Leave, without thinking twice, as soon as you read this letter of mine. Why do you like bad men? And you don't like me? Why?"

Felipe Camarão, captain-major of the Indians, wrote these lines to Pedro Poti on August 19, 1645, shortly after the Cunhaú massacre, when some indigenous people on the Dutch side, commanded by Jacob Rabi, had slaughtered a group of faithful together with the priest St. André de Soveral during a Mass, on which occasion one of the victims had his heart ripped out through his back: "I am sending you instructions again, because I truly love you. Why? Because I am, in truth, the true father of all, so that you may not lose your

salvation." In another passage, Felipe Camarão gives an insight into the chivalrous sentiments that characterized the people of Rio Grande do Norte and the deep friendship that existed between the Portuguese and the indigenous peoples: "If you do this for the King, it will be a very grand action on your part."

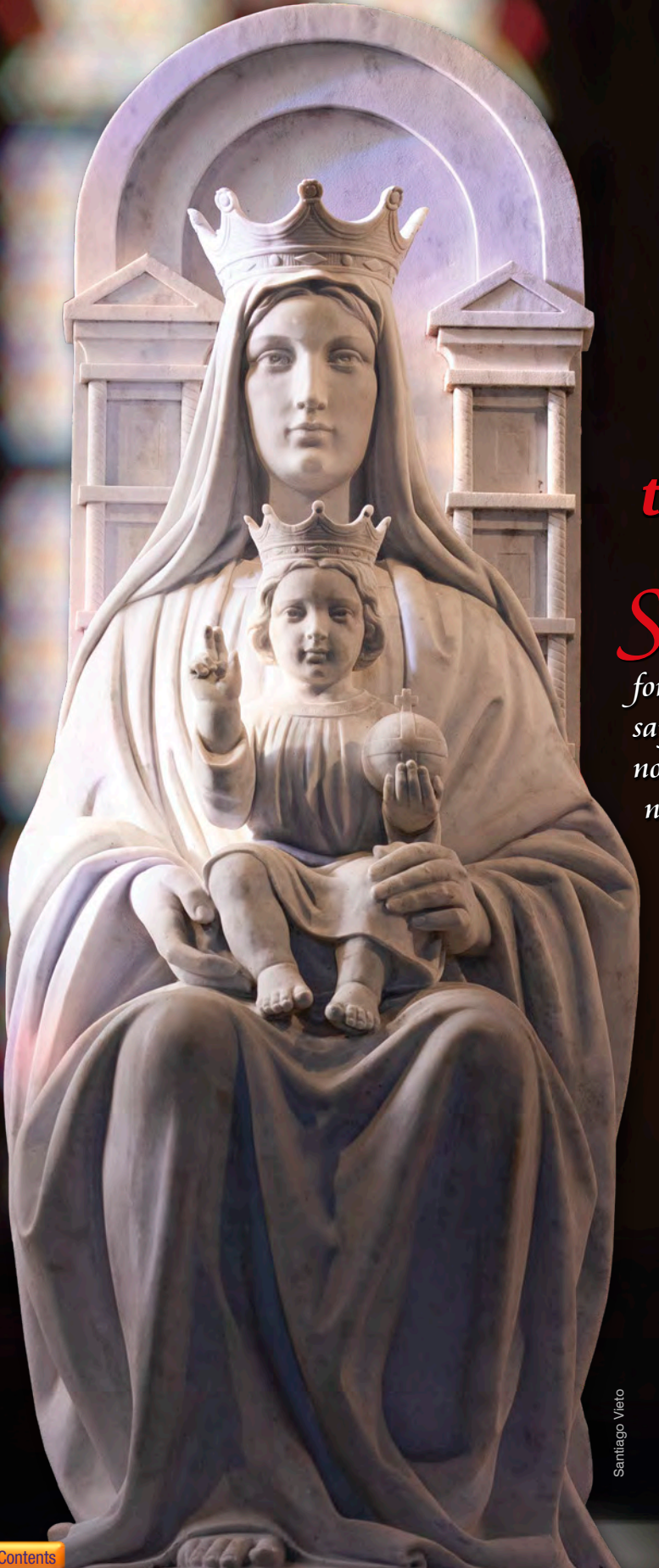
These letters suggest the existence of several factors that diverge from the typical portrayal of Brazilian history. If these indigenous people were able to write with such fluency and elevation in their own mother tongue, in whose familiar embrace they found the best expressions for their feelings, this is largely due to a handful of heroic priests, such as St. Joseph of Anchieta, who in prior decades transmitted the Faith to them and offered them an alphabet and a grammar. On not a few occasions, the Church and civilization, upon encountering indigenous roots, respected them, protected them, and enriched them with new sap, so that they would produce sweet fruits

that they would never have known, had they been abandoned in their primitive state.

The fact that the indigenous people had maintained more direct contact with the Portuguese for only a relatively short period of time – about a century and a half – makes this episode even more eloquent. In any case, it is only fitting to recognize the role of the priests, educators, and leaders who collaborated in this founding process of Brazil, especially in the Pernambuco Uprising, uniting, in different circumstances, combatants of European, indigenous, and African origin. ✦

¹ Article *Letters and "emails"*, *Autographs and Automatism*s, published in the September issue of our Magazine in this section.

² Cf. NAVARRO, Eduardo de Almeida. *Transcription and complete, annotated translation into Portuguese of the letters of the Camarão Indians, written in 1645 in Old Tupi*. In: www.scielo.br.



Our Lady of Coromoto -
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Mother of All the Predestined

Since Mary has formed Jesus Christ, the Head of the elect, it is also her office to form the members of that Head, that is to say, all true Christians; for a mother does not form the head without the members, nor the members without the head. Whoever, therefore, wishes to be a member of Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, must be formed in Mary by means of the grace of Jesus Christ, which She possesses in its fullness, in order to communicate it fully to her children, the true members of Jesus Christ.

St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort

Santiago Viero