

# THE SERAPH

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# The Seraph

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### EDITOR

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM

### PRODUCTION

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM  
Mr. Francis Y. No  
Sister Catherine, TOR

### CONTRIBUTORS

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM  
Fr. Anthony Lentz, OFM  
Sister Agnes, TOSF

### CIRCULATION

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM

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ALL CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE SENT TO :

The SERAPH  
3376 MOUNT READ BLVD.  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14616

TELEPHONE: (585) 621-1122

EMAIL: [father@friarsminor.org](mailto:father@friarsminor.org)

WEBSITES: [friarsminor.org](http://friarsminor.org) &  
[franciscanfathers.com](http://franciscanfathers.com)

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*In essentia - Únitas. In dubio - Libertas.  
In ómnibus - Cáritas.*

THE SERAPH

# TRUE OBEDIENCE

*Bishop Giles, OFM*

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Are differences of belief and practice essential differences or are they merely differences of taste or preference? We hear a lot about focusing upon what unites us rather than what divides us. It is worthwhile to consider what are inconsequential differences and what are things that divide us without any chance of unity or compromise.

Where the Church has dogmatically defined things, we must align our faith, if we wish to be Catholic. Where the Church has remained silent, we are free to adopt various understandings or interpretations. For example, we must believe that Mary is the Mother of God. (*In opposing the Nestorians, the "Council of Ephesus" made this a matter of faith: "If anyone does not confess that the Emmanuel in truth is God and that on this account the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God, let him be anathema."*) On the other hand, the Church has not defined what was Mary's favorite color. We are free to believe that Mary preferred blue to green or vice versa or any other color. There probably are people that will

argue one way or another, but at the end of the day, they only need to agree that Mary is the Mother of God to remain in Catholic unity.

In a similar manner, we can argue over various translations of the Sacred Scriptures or even of various prayers. Should we use modern English translations or older English translations? In the end, we only need to agree on the Catholic meanings indicated by the words in any translation.

When it comes to devotions, we again have room for a wide range of preferences. We may prefer the Litany of Loreto to the Litany of the Saints or vice versa but we must agree that God, the angels, and saints should be given due and proper honor. Various religious practices are open to satisfy different tastes, but all must practice prayer and strive to live virtuously if they desire to be Catholic.

The Church has defined and decreed that the Holy Mass is the Unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary. (*The Mass is the true and properly called Sacrifice of the New*

*Law. This is of faith from the "Council of Trent." "If anyone says that in the Mass a true and real sacrifice is not offered to God, or that to be offered is nothing else than that Christ is given to us to eat, let him be anathema."*) To believe that the Mass is only a Memorial Meal and is not one with the Sacrifice of Calvary is an essential difference. This is not a matter of taste or preference this is what separates Catholics from Protestants. There can be no compromise or meeting the other half-way. The Catholic Church insists upon this definition and belief. Likewise, belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist cannot be an indifferent matter of taste. To be truly Catholic we must believe in Transubstantiation. In this, there cannot be any unity with the Pagans or those who do not believe Jesus is God or with Protestants who do not believe that Jesus remains with us Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – The Living God – in the Holy Eucharist.

Every Catholic, to be truly Catholic, must believe that the Church is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. We may argue over whether an individual is a true successor of the Apostles or not, but we

must agree that the Church has to have true and legitimate successors to the Apostles – true bishops. We are obliged to honor, respect and obey our true bishop if we are Catholic. Those who hear their bishop hear God, Who sent him. Anyone that declares that bishops have no authority and that he does not need to hear and obey them is not Catholic. We are not free to obey in what we like and disobey in what we do not like – disobedience is sinful. It is clear that we are commanded to obey our true parents/shepherds/legitimate authority in all things. The only exception to this is that we are not obliged to obey if it means sinning. A wrong command from our parents, bishop, etc. or even an imprudent command should be obeyed as long as it is not sinful.

Obedience is not restricted to matters of faith and morals but applies to everything except sin. A true bishop must be obeyed when he forbids the celebration of Mass in a certain place, or at a certain time, or by a certain person. It does not matter how inconvenient or distasteful it may be to us. If he is our bishop, we must obey him or be guilty of sin. To believe and practice disobedience and

deny the necessity of obedience is heresy and separates us. The bishop or superior may be unjust in what he demands, this is his sin, but that does not free us from our obligations of obedience. The flock must hear and obey the voice of its shepherd, or all will be lost.

There are some who promote the idea that the Church has bishops that do not have any authority. Such an idea is inherently contradictory. There are no parents without children. There are no shepherds without flocks. There are no bishops without faithful. All parents have authority over their children. All shepherds have authority over their flocks. All bishops must have authority over their faithful. All authority must have jurisdiction. Parents' jurisdiction is over their children wherever they may be. The shepherd may be restricted to certain fields or property. Bishops may be likewise restricted by geography, nationality, etc. Ultimately, he must have authority over souls or else he is not a true bishop. We conclude that those who believe that bishops do not need to be obeyed or that they do not have authority are not Catholic. These have no unity

with the Church unless they renounce their anarchical beliefs and practices.

At the head of the Apostles, Jesus placed St. Peter to teach, rule, and sanctify all souls in His Name. As true bishops are successors to the Apostles, so true popes are successors to St. Peter. If a certain man is a true pope, then he speaks, governs, and acts in the Name of Jesus. It is an essential belief that a true pope is protected from error by the Holy Ghost in all his teachings as they relate to matters of faith and morals. *(The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex-cathedra, that is, when in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, is, by the divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, irreformable. But if anyone – which may God*

*avert! – presume to contradict this our definition, let him be anathema.*) We must believe that what he says to us is the voice of Jesus Christ speaking to us because he is His visible representative.

The question now is, are we free to disobey him in matters of practice or discipline? We are not free to disobey unless he commands us to sin. A true pope can forbid a practice or custom (though it may be unwise to do so) and all Catholics are obliged to obey him because refraining from a practice or custom is not sinful. If he commands the introduction of a new practice or custom that is sinful, we are not obliged to obey. For example, if a true pope forbids Catholics from baptizing people in rivers or streams unless it is an extreme emergency, all must obey. If he commands Catholics to worship and pray to the Pagan Buda, we must uniformly disobey. Now, if a pope were ever to make such an idolatrous and sinful demand we should recognize immediately that this is not God speaking and the Holy Ghost is not guarding this man and therefore, this man is not and cannot be a true pope. The command to practice idolatry is against faith and

morals.

When a pope says to any group that they may not build physical places of worship (churches) [*Refraining from construction is not sinful.*] this group must obey if they wish to be considered Catholic or they must logically say that they are not obligated to obedience because this man is not a true pope and has no authority over them.

It is difficult to obey commands that are distasteful or uncomfortable to us, but this is what must be done if we desire to keep the title of Catholic. Jesus was obedient unto death. He came not to do His own Will, but to do the Will of His Father in Heaven. He has made it clear that this is what we too must do if we are to be His disciples. However, when we see that commands are in direct contradiction to the teachings of Christ and are sinful to obey, we must obey God rather than the sinful command. When sinful commands and teachings come forth from the presumed Vicar of Jesus Christ (guided and protected from such error by the Holy Ghost) we have a very serious problem. Either: 1) The dogma of Papal Infallibility is wrong, and the

Church has failed or lied to us – then God has lied to us. This belief is heresy and would definitely separate us from the Catholic Church. Or: 2) This person is an impostor and is not a true Vicar of Jesus Christ.

It appears that many today have sought a middle term or compromise which we find illogical and untenable. These people would suggest that the individual “pope” is a material (physical) “pope” but that he is not a formal “pope” and in this manner, they can pretend honor and respect materially (physically) but not formally (spiritually or internally). In this manner, they believe that they can have a pope that they are not under any obligation to obey. (A kind of half-pope?) Of course, this freedom from obedience would also free them from obedience to the bishops that are in union with this “Material Pope” as well as the “priests” operating under their bishop’s authority. We hope that our dear reader can easily see the anarchy that such beliefs and practices engender.

It seems clear enough that this is not very different from the suggestion in the Garden of Eden: “If you taste of the forbidden fruit you will know both good and evil.” In

essence, you can have the best of both worlds. We see clearly the anarchy that developed from this illogical act of disobedience. Likewise, we perceive clearly the demonic monster of anarchy that has been let loose by the theory of having a “Material but not formal pope.”

We wish that all would follow Jesus Christ and become obedient unto death. We must, however, also imitate the Apostles when they were commanded not to preach in the Name of Jesus, and they replied that they must obey God rather than man. (*Acts 5:29*) We must believe that a true pope is infallible if we are Catholic. When a presumed pope speaks and acts in contradiction to Jesus Christ and the Church the conclusion must be that he is not Catholic and is not guided and protected by the Holy Ghost. Since the Holy Ghost is not dead, nor has He lost any of His Power it is obvious that this man cannot be a true pope. It is illogical to think that a non-Catholic (one cut off from the very body of the Church) is somehow the very head of the Church. Impostors and actors should not be confused with true popes just as heretics and schismatics should not be confused with

true Catholics.

We must hear the words of St. Paul and reject those who come teaching a doctrine that is different from what we have already received even if they appear as angels of light. (*Galatians 1:8*) Indifferent things or undefined things can be argued over and dismissed while maintaining unity, but the dogmatic and defined truths of the Catholic Church cannot be dismissed or set aside for the sake of some kind of apparent unity.



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# LIFE IS CHANGED, NOT TAKEN AWAY

*Bishop Giles, OFM*

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*The Lord gives and then He takes away. ~Job*

From the moment of our conception (creation), God adds to our physical being. We physically increase and grow. We also add material things to our possession – clothing, shelter, nourishment. We add others to our lives, as well. We have a mother, father, sister, brother, wife/husband, children. All our lives God gives or adds to our lives materially. However, He is also adding spiritual things for our souls. Sadly, many never reflect upon the fact that all that they have and all that they are is a gift from God. What is even worse is that we seldom recognize the many spiritual gifts that God gives us.

We find that with the decrease in material things, God draws our hearts and minds to spiritual things. Therefore, it is often necessary and good that we lose, or willingly make the sacrifice, of so many of our material gifts. We are called upon to sacrifice and make an offering of the First Fruits, tithing – giving God the best. We are to make an offering of the loss of health, wealth, station, even family. “If you wish to be perfect, go sell all that you have and give it to the

poor.” (*Matt. 19:21*) “Take up your cross daily and come follow Me.” (*Luke 9:23*) Unless we are willing to hate our mother, father, brother, sister, children, etc. for the sake of God, we cannot follow Christ. (*Luke 14:26*)

God gives and then takes away so that we may grow and advance in ever greater things. When we have obtained many things, He asks us to give them back or He takes them back – either gradually or quickly. In either case, after we have reached our material fullness (age, wisdom, health, possessions, family, station, etc.) God returns us to a previous material state with the loss of these things. There is a saying that we are once a man, but twice a baby. This applies to our physical lives as we decline – as we draw closer to death.

Sickness and loss are not evils. We only need the faith of Job to understand this. These losses are gifts from God. It is through the loss of them that we become like the little children that are welcomed by Him into Heaven. It is in our weaknesses that we are made strong.

We are to experience a decrease in our worldly lives, so that the Life of Jesus may increase in us. With St. Paul we are to reach the place where we can say: "It is not I, but Christ Jesus living within me." (*Gal. 2:20*)

When Joseph of Egypt was sold into slavery by his brothers, he did not hold this against them. The loss of his family, his freedom, his possessions were not taken away by them, but rather, it was God Who allowed them to be taken from Him. God wanted to use Joseph to save His people by supplying food for them during the famine. The evil intentions of his brothers were turned into good and to their benefit by God arranging to put Joseph in power in Egypt. With Job, Joseph was able to bless God in all things – in suffering and in abundance.

The Christian philosophers tell us that sin is the only evil. Everything except sin is good. The receiving of God's material or worldly blessings is good and the loss of these goods is, likewise, good. Health is good, and sickness is good. Riches are good and poverty is good. Social status is good but so is the lack of it. A wife and family are good, but so is the loss of these. As we peruse the Gospels, we see that Jesus taught a doctrine that indicated that, physical sickness and weakness are better than

physical health and strength. Physical poverty is better than material wealth and power. Celibacy is better than marriage. Childlikeness is better than adultlikeness. The very life of Jesus shows us His preference for humility, poverty, and lowliness.

This material world and material life is not our home. Our hearts and souls were made for God, not this life or any material thing. We are only passing through this world. This is our test, to see if we will love God more than the gifts that He gives us. Will we willingly and lovingly return to Him all that He has given us? Will we sacrifice, material blessings, family and friends, and even our very selves for the love of Him?

This physical death is not the end but is rather the beginning. Life truly begins when we completely die to this world. When all the material things have been returned or sacrificed to God, our eternal (spiritual life) begins. As we return the physical body of a departed loved one to God, we need not mourn and weep as those who do not have faith. God has given, let us be grateful and bless Him, and God has taken away, may we also be grateful and bless Him. The bodies we consign to the earth were just a shell for immortal souls that are destined to rise gloriously loving God for all of eternity in Heaven.

Yet, we know that not every soul goes to Heaven. There is a Hell for those who have died as enemies of God. We should fear this for our loved ones as well as for ourselves, but we must not lose hope either. Charity covers a multitude of sins and Jesus has offered an infinite Sacrifice for us so that we may be forgiven and enter eternal life in Heaven. We must hope and pray that we and our faithful departed die in the virtue of true Charity.

We also know that nothing stained can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, so we are grateful that God has provided a place of purgation where we may purify our souls after we leave this world and thus be made worthy to enter into the Kingdom of His Glory. Let us not forget our loved ones after they leave this world, but rather let us continue to pray for them and offer them any relief that we can provide for them as they may be purging their souls in Purgatory.

The departed have finished their course here on earth and have been judged, we have not. With loving hearts, we mourn the separation from our loved ones, but we must remember to love God. He gives and He takes, blessed be His Holy Name. We should remember that we are soon to follow the departed out of this world. Let us examine our own lives. Have we loved God

always and in all things more than we loved them and even more than we love ourselves? Do we bless Him when He takes away, as well as when He gives? Our voluntary renunciation of His gifts is not an insult to Him but rather is very pleasing to Him. In this, we advance our death to this world and this life (we decrease) and draw ever closer our spiritual life where the Life of Jesus increases in us.

May the souls of the Faithful departed rest in eternal peace with eternal light shining upon them.





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# THE FAMILY: THE WAR CONTUNUES

*Father Joseph Noonan, OFM*

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## PART II

Artificial birth control quickly created several societal and moral problems. It promoted infidelity among the married and promiscuity among the unmarried. Married couples began to limit the number of children in their families in a sinful manner. Instead of emphasizing the need to sacrifice for the sake of the family, it became all about selfishness, where couples wanted the best home, cars, etc. One will commonly be told the couple cannot afford more than one or two children. Since they wish to live like royalty instead of the common working man, this is probably true. Their selfishness has truly blinded them, to the detriment of their souls.

Catholic couples may have been a little slower in using birth control, but still, by the 1960s Catholics were ignoring the laws of the Church. In addition, couples were lied to by the Catholic clergy who routinely approved inquiring couples about its use. As a result, otherwise good Catholics found themselves living in opposition to the Church's

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teachings and being guilty of sin and not being fully aware of it. By the 1990s, Modernist sources reveal that about 90% of Catholic couples have used some form of artificial birth control during their married life. Although many might object to the analogy, this is like a couple walking into an area known to have land mines, not concerned with the damage it would do to them. It is one thing to endure the enemies (moral) assaults, but quite another to carry out self-inflicting attacks.

Artificial birth control has struck at the very heart of marriage - the Divine command to procreate. It truly has had the effect of a mortal wound, where the patient (the married couple) is on life-support, but in this situation, they are totally unaware of their serious condition. For the couple that has used birth control to a greater degree, they have been spiritually blinded and are clearly unaware they are not able to see.

Many of these families in the past would have had several children (several here means 4-7 children), but today they

might have three. One wonders at the underlying frustration of marriages because they have not carried out their duties properly. A frustration that may go unrecognized yet is the cause of so many Catholic divorces.

It is here that a comment must be made on the poor instruction these couples generally have received in preparation for their wedding. This writer has been in a position to have had some of these couples become members of Corpus Christi Catholic Church in Lubbock, Texas. When inquiring about this instruction, one is left “shaking one’s head” at the lack of proper instruction, leaving these men and women at a loss at how to properly conduct themselves in married life. Unfortunately, their ignorance brings with it problems that easily could have been avoided if those in charge of these classes would have responsibly carried out their duties. Perhaps the worst comment which has been conveyed is, the local priest telling the couple “if it doesn’t work out, just get a divorce!” Apparently, that man does not accept the indissolubility of marriage. Should one be surprised at the divorce rate among Catholics when not only are they ignorant of the

Faith and are so poorly prepared for the married state, but are especially not taught the two essential principles of the married life: the unity of the married state and the indissolubility of marriage.

Abortion is without a doubt the most important moral issue in the world and is the greatest attack against the family and marriage. If artificial contraception is to be thought of as a mortal wound that put the family on life-support, then abortion must be the heart attack and stroke which puts marriage into a coma. Why does one say both heart attack and stroke? Because the unthinking masses (a stroke often disrupts the normal functions of the brain) strike at the very heart of marriage (procreation), their own young, something which does not normally happen among animals.

Any woman who is willing to kill her own child is nothing more than the most selfish monster science fiction could ever create. It is a mockery of God as the Creator of all human life. Unfortunately, it has become the accepted form of human sacrifice. Most who fight against abortion (pro-lifers, etc.) miss the more important point of the soul of this child never being able to

go to Heaven. Does one not realize that Satan knows where these souls go? Would he desire abortion if all of these infant souls went to heaven?

The significance of this issue is displayed each day since 1973 (Roe v. Wade) with the battle between those who want abortion to end against those who want the murdering to continue. The battle goes far beyond flesh and blood. It is, indeed, a battle between Principalities and Powers, literally between Heaven and Hell.

An issue which many would not consider an attack upon the family is precisely that, because of its many effects. To use the war analogy, it is like being pelted with machine-gun fire which often misses the target but eventually kills the soldier with multiple rounds. The machine-gun does not generally seem to be as threatening as the guided missile, the bomb or even tank rounds, but the results are just as deadly when it hits the target, in fact, it usually shreds the body of the victim, thus, the use of the analogy.

The issue at hand is chastity and purity. The effect of these virtues is an outward modesty and an inward meekness. The parents have a responsibility to

teach supernatural virtue to their children. Too often the parents are not equipped to do so because they know little or nothing of these virtues. It must be said, though, that a good example and basic instruction will go a long way in teaching children how they ought to conduct themselves.

It wasn't that long ago that many Catholic mothers, and mothers in general, taught their children, and especially the girls, about basic common decency and modesty. When these natural virtues were taught, women generally lived their adult lives as good, decent people.

Something changed, though, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fashions and styles changed in such a way that had never been seen before. How many are aware that Freemasonry in the late 1920s set out on a plan to destroy the morals of women? Why would they attack the women and not the men? Because they understood better than most, that women, and mothers, in particular, are the moral backbone of society. Thus, the war upon the family became engaged in a battle that literally blind-sided the family.

Moving forward through the 20<sup>th</sup> century one sees clearly

how the fashions of women became more and more immodest. For the doubting Thomases, I would like to refer you to the different papal documents of Pope Pius XII who warned us of the “tyranny of fashion.” The tyranny of which he speaks refers to those women who will wear the latest fashions even when they are sinfully immodest.

This sinful attitude should not be a part of the Catholic home. It is reprehensible and undermines who a woman is. The degradation which has taken place is beyond the description of what defines otherwise decent women. Yes, it has made women who have the desire to be decent Catholic mothers far too loose in their moral foundation. Part of this tragedy is that too many of these women are quite oblivious to this fact. A simple way to look at this is, you are what you wear. One is sadly convinced today that far too many women, most of whom are mothers, are so clueless about their feminine dignity, they will nearly degrade themselves to that of brutes.

Society has become so accustomed to the immorality of today, little regard is given to the destructiveness of the family. This one moral issue

has done more to undermine common decency on one hand and the desire to be virtuous on the other. Unless good women speak out and lead the way, families will further sink into nothing more than housing for the young, who are given little instruction into that which is right and good and are too often led down the road to perdition.

*To Be Continued*

# THE LITURGICAL YEAR WITH ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

*Father Anthony Lentz, OFM*

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## *The Season After the Epiphany*

*“At the Solemnity of the Epiphany, in putting before us the call of the Gentiles to the Christian faith, she [The Church] wishes us daily to give thanks to the Lord for such a blessing; she wishes us to seek with lively faith the living and true God, to penetrate deeply and religiously the things of heaven, to love silence and meditation in order to perceive and grasp more easily heavenly gifts.”(Encyclical Letter - “**Mediator Dei:**” Pope Pius XII*

One could make a sermon or write an article simply on these excerpts from Pope XII’s encyclical, which overflows with wisdom. For the sake of brevity I will pick one part, “*she (The Church) wishes us to seek with lively faith the living and true God,*” This could be looked at as our own Epiphany, or rather, the manifestation of God’s Divine Will for all of us. There are three general (although not exclusively) ways that we learn God’s Will: 1) through private inspiration, 2) through Scripture, and 3) through the authority of the

Teaching Church. The life St. Francis gives us examples of all three.

*Let us return now to the plains of Umbria!*

Francis of Bernadone is a perfect example of how someone should go about discerning God’s Will. It is true that God revealed Himself to Francis in remarkable ways, but Francis never let that become a source of pride. He instead took the humble road by retiring from the world, and by giving himself to solitude and prayer. Patience was his constant companion, and good works was his pastime. After his encounter with the leper, he began to go to the leper colony and serve these poor souls. He was preparing himself, by overcoming himself. He was opening up his soul to receive the inspirations of God, and for this, he was rewarded. The story of St. Francis praying in the dilapidated church of San Damiano and hearing a voice coming from the crucifix is famous. Here Francis was told to rebuild God’s house. He proceeded to rebuild San Damiano, and at least two other

churches. Even though this was not the primary meaning of the vision, it was the means that God chose to inspire others to imitate Francis – to become his brothers. It was to be through this holy brotherhood that the true mission of Francis would blossom, that is, the rebuilding of the life in the Church itself. Francis was called to bring to life the Gospel by practicing holy poverty, chastity, and obedience in the manner of the Gospels.

The vision in San Damiano was given to Francis, this is true; but would it have had any effect if his soul was not in right order? Would he have reaped any benefit from it if he did not follow the natural law, the Ten Commandments, and the guidance of his conscience? No, it would not have had any effect whatsoever. This is where we can all relate. The first step we must undertake is to conform ourselves to the laws of God, all of them. God inspires the eager soul with a desire to practice virtue and an equal desire to shun vice. The soul realizes that the war against sin is one that is worth waging, for the reward is beyond measure. This is the belief of a well-formed conscience, this is the inspiration of God's grace.

San Damiano and other private revelations certainly en-

couraged and inspired Francis. When God sent his first brother, Bernard of Qunitavalle, to him Francis would not even trust his own judgment concerning the way of life they should follow. He feared that he would do his own will and not God's. So, God inspired him to search the Scriptures, as St. Bonaventure relates: "*'This council,' he said, 'must be asked of God.'* Therefore early in the morning they entered the church of St. Nicholas, and having prayed to God, Francis, who was most devout to the Most Holy Trinity, thrice opened the book of the Gospels, beseeching Our Lord that, by three several testimonies, He would be pleased to confirm the holy purpose of Bernard. The first time he opened the book they came upon this passage: '*If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor.*' The second time they read, '*Take nothing for your journey.*' And the third time: '*He who would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*' This,' the holy man said, '*is our life and our rule, and the life and rule of all those who would join our company; if, then, thou wilt be perfect, go and do what thou hast heard.*'"

What we can learn from this passage is that we should make

the reading of Scriptures a daily practice. The Bible contains a variety of materials: theology, history, ethics, poetry, and logic. We can learn much about God's Will within its pages. This is by no means to be mistaken with "private interpretation," because our interpretation or understanding of Scriptures should only confirm what is contained in our catechism.

Finally, St. Francis learned God's Will through the Church itself. When his numbers increased, he knew that in order to avoid becoming a heretical sect he must obtain the official approval of the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Innocent III. Christ gave to St. Peter and his successors the power of "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" and for St. Francis to re-open the door of the Apostolic life he needed the proper permission. This permission was not easily given, for the Church officials had to be very cautious. They knew of others who had proposed a similar way of life, and they eventually became heretics. Pope Innocent had several meetings with St. Francis before God confirmed this holy undertaking with a revelation. St. Bonaventure tells us the details: "*He (the pope) saw in a dream the Lateran Basilica, now falling into ruin, supported by the shoulders of a*

*poor, despised, and feeble man. 'Truly,' said he, 'this is he who by his works and his teaching shall sustain the Church of Christ.' Hence he was filled with a great and special devotion and love for the servant of God, He granted all his petitions and promised to grant him still greater things. He approved the rule, gave him a mission to preach penance, and granted to all the lay brothers in the company of the servant of God to wear a tonsure smaller than worn by priests, and freely to preach the Word of God."*

What can we learn from all of this? It is true that most of us do not learn God's Will by means of visions, but all learn how to save our souls through His Holy Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ established His Church to be a living organization and conferred its administration to the Apostles and their successors. These men form what is known as the *Magisterium of the Church*. (**Note: This includes St. Peter and his successors, the popes, who have supreme dominion over the entire Church.**) It is the duty of the Magisterium to *sanctify, teach, and govern*. The laity must submit to the rule of the Church or they will suffer Our Lord's condemnation,

*“And if he will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen and the publican.” (St. Matthew 18: 17) To be “as a heathen and a publican” means to be excommunicated from the Church, and to be cut off from supernatural grace.*

If you intend to do God’s will and take your Faith seriously as St. Francis did then listen to Pope Pius XII. He exhorts us, *“to penetrate deeply and religiously the things of heaven.”* This can only be achieved by first cultivating a *“love (for) silence and meditation in order to perceive and grasp more easily heavenly gifts.”* Through these means, God will manifest His Will to you and lead you towards salvation.



***“And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”***

*~Matthew 2:11*

# ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

## *An Autobiography*

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### CHAPTER TWO A CATHOLIC HOUSEHOLD

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And now you know everything, dear Mother; you know that it was really our darling Father whom God showed me bent with age and bearing on his venerable face and silvery hair the symbol of his terrible trial.<sup>1</sup> As the Adorable Face of Jesus was veiled during His Passion, so it was fitting that the face of His humble servant should be veiled during the days of his humiliation, in order that it might shine with greater brilliance in Heaven. How I admire the ways of God in showing us beforehand this precious cross! Even so does a father's love prompt him both to dwell himself with delight on the treasure he has stored up for his children, and to allow those children to catch a stray glimpse of the glorious future he is preparing.

But the thought comes to my

mind: “Why did God give this light to a child, who, if she had understood it, would have died of grief?” Why? Here is one of the incomprehensible mysteries we shall only understand in Heaven, where they will be the subject of our eternal admiration. My God, how good Thou art! How well dost Thou suit the trial to our strength!

At that time, I had not the courage to think of the possibility of losing Papa, without feeling terrified. One day when he was at the top of a ladder, and I stood close by, he called out: “Move away, little Queen! if I fall, I shall hurt you.” But my soul rebelled against the idea and going still nearer to the ladder I determined that should he fall; I would perish with him and so be spared the pain of seeing him die.

How I loved and admired him! When he expounded to me his ideas on the most serious matters as if I were a grown-up girl, I would say quite artlessly: “It is certain, Papa, that if you spoke like that to the great men

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<sup>1</sup>In 1888 M. Martin had several attacks of paralysis, which, after affecting his limbs, left them each in turn, but continued to affect his mind until the end of his life. For a space of three years it was found necessary to entrust him to the care of strangers. [CARMEL.]

who govern the country, they would make you its king, and France would be happier than she has ever been. But you yourself would be unhappy, for such is the lot of kings, and besides, you would no longer be my King alone, so I am glad they do not know you!”

I was between six and seven when I saw the sea for the first time. I could not turn away my eyes: its majesty, the roaring of the waves, the whole vast spectacle impressed me deeply and spoke to my soul of God's power and greatness. While we were on the beach, a gentleman and his wife, after looking at me for a long time, asked Papa if I were his child, and remarked that I was a very pretty little girl. Papa at once made them a sign not to flatter me, but I was pleased to have overheard, for I did not think I was pretty. You had always been most careful to avoid saying anything before me that might in the least way spoil my childlike simplicity. And because of my perfect confidence in you, I attached

little importance to these expressions of admiration, and so gave them no further thought.

That same evening, at the hour when the sun seems to sink into the broad expanse of waters, leaving behind it a trail of light, I sat with you on a lonely rock and let my gaze linger on this path of splendor. You described it as an image of grace illumining the way of faithful hearts here upon earth. Then I pictured my own soul as a tiny barque, with graceful white sails, floating in the midst of the golden stream, and I determined never to steer it out of the sight of Jesus, so that it might make its way swiftly and tranquilly towards the Heavenly Shore.

END OF CHAPTER TWO  
*To Be Continued.....*



*“For a long time now I have not belonged to myself; I have given myself entirely to Jesus. He is free to do with me whatever He likes.”*

*Sister Agnes' Favorites*

Lord, help me to live this day,  
peacefully.

To lean upon Thy great strength  
trustfully, restfully.

To wait for the unfolding of Thy will  
patiently, serenely.

To meet  
others  
peacefully,  
joyously.

To face  
tomorrow  
confidently,  
courageously.

Amen.



*~St. Francis of Assisi*

# THE GIFT OF ONESELF

*From the French of  
THE REVEREND JOSEPH  
SCHRYVERS, C.S.S.R.*

*Translated by a Religious of Carmel,  
Bettendorf, Iowa*

## PART TWO

### *The Practice of Abandonment*

#### CHAPTER TWO

*The Practice of Self-Abandonment in  
Various Occupations*



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#### ARTICLE 5

#### THE SELF-ABANDONED SOUL, IN HER RELATIONS WITH THE WORLD

The soul that is given to God should nevertheless live in this world in a human manner. God has not given her an angelic nature, exclusively occupied with thinking of Him and loving Him. She lives in the bosom of a family, in a religious community, in society. A thousand ties of friendship, interest, propriety, relationship, bind her and claim her attention.

Such is the order established by God. In vain would the soul struggle against this necessity. Unless she were to bury herself in a solitary cave and were to have only the deer of the

wilderness as companions of her new life, she would not escape from the dominion of these human relationships.

Among these, there are some that are agreeable and honorable, offering innocent pastime, useful diversion, and necessary distraction. Some are cordial and intimate, like balm to a wounded heart, stimulant to a wearied courage, and comfort to an afflicted soul. Some are indifferent; their motive is civility, suitability, interest: relations of a day, less stable than the motive that inspires them. There are some that are forced, guided by necessity, subjection, fear, or imposed by nature, position, occupation, and environment.

For the imprudent soul, the number and diversity of these relations form a serious obstacle to sanctification. She lets herself be entangled as in the meshes of a net, loses her interior liberty, her detachment of heart, and that peaceful self-possession which is the basis of the perfect life.

Sometimes these relations please her, charm her, and lull her to rest on the brink of a precipice. Sometimes they preoccupy her, agitate her, and embarrass her, robbing her of time and repose. And sometimes they cause irritation and displeasure, arousing jealousy and hatred, and carrying her thoughts far away from the God of peace.

Worn out, held captive, harassed in every way, how can she follow Jesus into the desert of her heart, close its entrance, and sit tranquilly at the Feet of her Master?

It is necessary, then, to govern these relations wisely, to cut away those that are superfluous, to reduce the number of those that are merely serviceable, and to rule those which are necessary.

For the soul that is generously surrendered to Jesus, it is easy to set about the work of elimination. She does not love

the world; she fears neither its criticism nor its ridicule. Thus, in one swift flight, she rises above its esteem or its disapproval. She breaks off, she cuts away, and she filters, keeping only what propriety or necessity bids her preserve. Thus, sure of doing the Divine Will, she strives to keep the freedom of her heart, the calm of her mind, the moderation of her movements.

The truly interior soul is never captive to any creature, however agreeable and attractive the intercourse may be, however sincere and pure the attachment. She never entirely gives herself up to anyone but Jesus. In the depth of her heart there is a place that no earthly friend, however intimate, can enter. The door remains closed, for the Lord alone must enter there. There is the dwelling of God, the cellar reserved for Jesus and the soul, His spouse. Thus, the heart which belongs to God is always filled with Him — filled with Jesus, and always overflowing. This super-abundance must then flow out upon the creatures which surround her. No one is more loving than the simple soul; no one loves more purely, more constantly. Her love is free from all selfish calculation because it is brimming over with the love of

Jesus. It is not susceptible to variations; it is independent of caprice and the humor of the moment; it is not regulated according to the qualities, the beauty, the merit, the kindness of others; for it has its foundation in God alone. Infidelity, ingratitude, treason, astonish it, but cannot discourage it. Its own source is divine.

As the interior soul never gives herself up entirely to others, neither does she seek to possess the affection or the esteem of any creature. She is well aware that she has no right to do so, for Jesus is the sole Master of hearts, the sole Sovereign to Whom is due all love and all glory.

Moreover, she is not ignorant of the fact that all human glory is fragile and full of deceit. Experience has proved to her that no creature can long give satisfaction to a heart or satiate its hunger for love. Man feels that he is made for the infinite.

## ARTICLE 6

### THE HOLY LIBERTY OF A SOUL THAT IS GIVEN TO GOD

Thus, the soul lives detached and free in the midst of a world of human relationships. She commands and governs them and regulates their nature, time, and manner. She feels that she

is lifted immeasurably above the persons and things which surround her and strive to engross her. An insurmountable barrier separates her from them; and this barrier is her uninterrupted surrender to Jesus.

Sometimes the world believes that it has removed this obstacle; but while it thinks that it can possess this soul and draw her into its whirlpool, Jesus Himself calls her into her interior, into that intimate part to which the world has no access. He draws her away from exterior agitation and re-establishes her in her habitual calm.

Nothing, neither friends nor enemies, can harm this soul. As no affection, no human sympathy can absorb her attention or carry away her heart, so no violence can intimidate her, no interest tie her down.

Like a traveler hastening on his way, she passes through this world without attaching herself to anything. Beautiful landscapes, enchanting spots, invite her to pause; she looks at them, admires them, but passes on.

Unwearied, she pursues her course, her eyes fixed upon her goal. It is true she rests sometimes at the roadside; she moistens her bread in the water

of the brook; she stops to pluck the fruit offered by the wayside tree; but when she is strengthened and refreshed, she hastens her forward march.

How wonderful it is to see a soul thus living, tranquil and solitary, in the midst of an agitated and harassed world! One might call her a majestic oak in the midst of a coppice-wood. The wind scarcely moves the top of this mighty tree. When everything around is bending, is uprooted or broken, the tree is unshaken and calm. When the whirlwind of worldly affairs carries off ordinary souls and throws them pell-mell into dissipation and trouble, the interior soul remains immovable, her face lifted confidently toward Heaven, her heart rooted in Jesus.

Oh, what a great secret it is to remain ruler of one's own house, to possess one's heart, to govern its relations, instead of allowing it to pour itself out and to be dissipated by them!

O Jesus, teach me this divine secret! Bind me to Thee so firmly that no creature can separate me from Thee. I know that I am weakness itself; everything makes its impression on me. A look from a friend, the gesture of an enemy, a cutting word—all affects me

or troubles me. Adversity casts me down, contradiction discourages me; suffering unnerves me; opposition exasperates me; a testimony of affection captivates me, its absence pains me; a kind word uplifts me; praise flatters me; approbation stimulates me. I am at the mercy of my impressions.

My mind and my heart do not belong to me; they are open places where bearers of all sorts of tidings may meet, where friends and enemies come to discourse, to litigate, often against me.

My Jesus, establish Thy sovereign reign in me! Drive from my heart these strangers, these vendors, these money-changers who make of Thy sanctuary a public market. Grant me the liberty of the children of God, the liberty Thou hast come to bring to earth. Let me not be dependent upon anyone on earth except Thee and those who hold Thy place. Let not human respect influence me; let approbation or criticism find me insensible; let not the multiplicity of my duties and of necessary occasions for intercourse with others distract me from Thee!



# The Catholic Faith

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“Our greatest fault is that we wish to serve God in our own way, not in His way – according to our will, not according to His will. When He wishes us to be sick, we wish to be well; when He desires us to serve Him by sufferings, we desire to serve Him by works; when He wishes us to exercise charity, we wish to exercise humility; when He seek from us resignation, we wish for devotion, a spirit of prayer, or some other virtue. And this is not because the things we desire are more pleasing to Him, but because they are more to our taste. This is certainly the greatest obstacle we can raise to our own perfection, for it is beyond doubt that if we wish to be Saints, according to our own will, we shall never be so at all. To be truly a Saint, it is necessary to be one according to the will of God.”

– St. Francis de Sales



# FRANCISCAN SAINTS

FEBRUARY 3RD

**Blessed Matthew Girgenti**

*Confessor, First Order*

Matthew, born at Girgenti on the island of Sicily, entered the Franciscan Order when he was still quite young. When he had completed his studies and had been ordained a priest, the desire to enter upon a more perfect observance of the Franciscan rule led him to transfer to the reform of St. Bernardine of Siena, the fame of whose personal virtues was another inducement for Matthew to make the change.

St. Bernardine soon perceived the outstanding qualities of the young religious and took him with him as a companion on the missions that he was then giving throughout Italy. In his ardent zeal, Matthew was instrumental in the conversion of numerous sinners, and in rekindling the flame of piety where it had long since grown cold. In imitation of his master Bernardine, he did all in his power to promote devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus.

Believing that religious perfection is particularly merit-

orious before God, Matthew strove earnestly to promulgate the perfect observance of the rule of St. Francis. He went to Spain, where he was successful in introducing the observance in many convents. Then he went to his own country of Sicily, where, with the approval of the Holy See, he established several convents and labored with much success among the people. In honor of the name of Jesus and that of His Blessed Mother, Matthew gave every convent he founded the title of St. Mary of Jesus.

About this time the bishop of Girgenti died, and clergy and laity joined in the request to have Matthew as their chief pastor. He resisted at first, but Pope Eugene IV commanded him to accept the appointment. He discharged his office so well that his diocese soon flourished with virtue. He set himself vigorously against prevalent vice and disorders. His course made him powerful enemies who denounced him to the pope. The gold was to be tried in the

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fire. Matthew was cited to Rome by Pope Eugene IV, to answer the charges brought against him. But the inquiry resulted in such clear justification of the bishop that the pope declared him innocent and sent him back with honor to his diocese.

However, not long after, Matthew, worn out by his labors, voluntarily resigned his office in order to return to the convent and prepare himself for death.

For several years following, God visited Matthew with many severe maladies and, thus purified, he entered the eternal delights of heaven. He died in the convent at Palermo in 1451. His body was taken to the church on an open bier. When the procession arrived before the high altar, to the amazement and terror of all present, the deceased prelate raised himself on the bier, adored the Blessed Sacrament with folded hands, and then lay back again.

Numerous miracles occurred at his grave, and the people honored him like a saint from the very beginning. Pope Clement XIII confirmed the devotion to him, and later Pope Pius VII renewed the confirmation.

### ***ALL FOR JESUS***

1.) Consider that Blessed

Matthew not only preached devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, but in the very active life that he led, he always did everything for Jesus. He took to heart how our Divine Savior came down from heaven, spending thirty years in a poor, hard life, and sparing Himself no labor in the course of His preaching, yes, exposed Himself to the most violent persecution in order to announce His holy doctrine, and finally submitted to bitter suffering and the most painful, disgraceful death in order to redeem us. For that reason, nothing seemed too difficult for Matthew in order to win souls for Jesus and to promote His interests. — Was it not for you, too, that Jesus made a complete oblation of Himself? Are you also filled with zeal and do you make sacrifices to further the interests of religion and the salvation of souls? Do you at least sincerely endeavor to make your own soul pleasing to Jesus?

2.) Consider that in conducting his missions for love of Jesus, Blessed Matthew labored above all to root out vices. That must also be our main objective: to prevent offenses against God, above all in ourselves, but also in others so far as we can. If we wish to be followers of Jesus, we must never for the sake of a creature do or permit others to do anything displeasing to God.

Yes, “*we ought rather,*” says the Venerable Thomas a Kempis (2:8), “*to choose to have the whole world against us than offend Jesus*”; and you may never, he continues, “desire to be singly praised or beloved; for this belonged to God alone, who hath none like unto Himself; neither desire that anyone's heart should be much taken up with thee. But let Jesus be in thee and in every good man.” — What is there, perhaps, in your heart that is displeasing to Jesus?

3.) Consider that, imitating Blessed Matthew's love of Jesus, we should not be satisfied with merely preventing evil. We must also do all in our power to promote whatever is good by endeavoring to lead others, but especially ourselves, to greater perfection. Above all, we should exert ourselves to detach our heart more and more from all inordinate affection to creatures and to ourselves, so that in all our good works our purpose and intention may be directed to God alone. “*If thou seek in*

*others thy comfort,*” says Thomas a Kempis again (2:7), “*thou wilt more often meet with loss; if thou seek thyself, thou shalt find thyself also, but to thy own ruin; but if in all things thou seekest Jesus, truly thou shalt find Jesus,*” — here upon earth for thy consolation, and hereafter as thy eternal joy in heavenly bliss. — Often examine into the sincerity of your intention.



### ***PRAYER OF THE CHURCH***

*We beseech Thee, O almighty God, grant us at the intercession of blessed bishop Matthew, Thy confessor, that as he was inflamed with love for the most Holy Name of Thy Son, so we, being also enkindled by it, may strive to despise what is earthly and to love what is heavenly. Through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

# THE GREATEST TREASURE

*Reverend L. Chiavarino*

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## CHAPTER XIII

### WHATEVER WE DO FOR THE HOLY SOULS ALWAYS TURNS TO OUR ADVANTAGE

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A remarkable incident occurred in Paris in 1827. A poor servant was in the habit of observing the praiseworthy practice of having a Mass said each month for the souls in Purgatory. However, because of a long illness, she lost her position and soon used up all her savings. By the time she recovered her health, all that she possessed was twenty cents. Realizing that she had not had the Mass said that month, she went to church, gave her few remaining pennies as stipend, and assisted at Mass, for her usual intention, with great devotion. She had gone only a few paces from the church, when she was accosted by a young man, tall, pale, and of noblemen. He asked: "You

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are looking for work, are you not?"

"Yes, I am," replied the girl.

"Go to a house on X Street, No. 10. I think you will find employment there."

The young girl went to the house named; she was received by a kind-looking lady.

"Madam," said the girl, "I have learned that you are in need of a maid and I have come to offer my services."

"But, my child, no one knows that I am in need of help. Who directed you here?"

"Madam, it was a young man whom I met on the street a short while ago."

The lady was lost in thought trying to imagine who the young man could be, when the maid caught sight of a photograph in the room.

“This, Madam, is the person who told me to come here this morning.”

“But that is a picture of my only son, and he has been dead for two years,” exclaimed the matron. “What can this mean?”

The young girl then related her whole story, and it was not difficult to conclude that the soul of the young man had been released from Purgatory by the Mass which the young girl had offered. The lady took her not as a maid, but as a loved daughter.

This is a striking example of the good accomplished by Mass offered for the souls in Purgatory.

While still very young, St. Peter Damian was left an orphan by the death of both his parents. He was brought up by one of his older brothers who treated him very harshly, and who did not even provide him with necessary food and clothing. One day Peter found a piece of silver money and was unable to locate the owner. The joy which the little boy felt may be easily

imagined: he knew that he had found a treasure, and immediately made plans for the purchase of many things of which he was in need. However, the thought of his deceased parents changed matters a bit, and he decided to have a Mass said for them. From that day he seemed under the special protection of the holy souls, and his fortunes changed. One of his other brothers became interested in him and sent him away to study. Peter Damian became a priest, rose to the rank of bishop and then cardinal. Finally, he became a saint of God. Here we have another instance of great benefits begun by one Mass offered for the poor souls.



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