

# THE SERAPH

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*The Road to Calvary by Giotto di Bondone - c. 1305*

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*In essentia - Unitas. In dubio - Libertas.  
In omnibus - Caritas.*

# TRUE CHARITY

*Bishop Giles, OFM*

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We do not consider all those outside of the True Church as our enemies. They are in error but not all of them are filled with hatred for the Church or of God. We hope that many of these are simply living in ignorance. In any case, we are commanded to love them – even those who would be our enemies (*Matthew 5:44*).

The world appears more and more to promote the polarization of people rather than unity. We are placed at odds with one another. In the political realm, we find conservatives and liberals at war with each other. In the business world, we find capital and labor at odds. We find the sexes fighting one against the other. The wealthy and the poor. Nation against nation. Etc.

So, it is in the realm of religion. There is one true religion – the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith. All others are in opposition to her. Too often, we see alleged divisions of “Conservative Catholic” and “Liberal Catholic;” some promoting women in the priesthood and others in opposition; lay-ministers striving to take over the priest’s

responsibilities, etc. These often boil down to different religions rather than opposite ends in the same faith. There are very specific doctrines to which we must all believe, profess, and live if we are truly Catholic. Any serious deviation from these establishes a different or new religion – whether it is acknowledged or not.

In the “Traditional” realm of Catholicism, we often come upon broken families where one or more members have ostracized themselves, or have been ostracized, from the rest because of differing religious beliefs. Often the “Traditional” Catholic will have nothing to do with his own flesh and blood. These will allege that they must separate themselves from the heretics and there ensue animosities and even hatred. While Jesus did tell us that we are either with Him or we are against Him (*Matthew 12:30*), He also said that we must love one another (*John 13:34-35*). We must not hate our enemies but rather we must love them (*Matthew 5:44*).

It is a heart-wrenching scene with this division, animosity, and even hatred all in the name

of religion. We have frequently admonished Catholics not to sever all the ties with their family and friends. If we are right and they are wrong and we cut off all communication with them, what chance will they ever have of entering the true Church? Are we not supposed to be the lifeline provided by God for their salvation – the instrument in His Hands?

The great missionary saints were not content to abandon the Muslim, Jew, or heretic in their errors. Many missionaries willingly sacrificed their own lives for the conversion of these “enemies.”

We very frequently misinterpret the strong words the Church uses in condemning errors as a license to hate, condemn and curse the very people suffering under the burden of these falsehoods. The Jews, the Muslims, the heathens and heretics of every description are all created in the image and likeness of God. They are all called to Him. Jesus came to redeem them all. The Catholic Church has been sent to convert all the nations in the world.

In this matter, especially, it seems that we need to listen and follow Jesus ever more carefully – Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart

(*Matthew 11:29*). He came to save, not to condemn (*John 3:17*). The condemnation comes with the judgment in the end.

St. Paul teaches that we should excommunicate or cut off the public sinner from among us for his own good so that he may be saved (*1 Corinthians 5*). The same penalty is often imposed upon the public heretics to shock them from their wicked ways as they may feel the separation from the rest of the Church. However, we now find that the true believer is the odd man out. The heretics and sinners find support and community from each other rather than from the true Church. Hence, it appears that the penalty of excommunication or the label of heretic have lost their sting to the modern and deadened conscious. As many laugh and scorn at these penalties, we should rather be careful not to give them such an opportunity to insult the true Church and therefore render themselves even more guilty. The penalty is there, but what good does it do to angrily point this out to those who have become hardened? We are not to render evil for evil, but rather render love and goodness when we have received evil (*Romans 12:21*). If what others say about us is false, we should not become angry because God

knows the truth. What does it matter what men think about us? If anything, we should be concerned about the person speaking the lie. If he is malicious, then he will have to answer to God. Our hearts should be motivated by love – even to the point of praying that God will forgive him for his sin against us. Let us forgive as we have been forgiven. (*Matthew 6:9-15*) We should recall that Jesus remained silent in the face of false accusations (*Matthew 26:62-63*).

Saint Paul admonishes those who are married to non-believers, to remain in their marriage if their spouse will do so peacefully. In this manner, we hope to win the non-believer to the faith (*1 Corinthians 7:12-14*). For the same reason, we should not alienate family and friends just because they are non-believers. At the same time, we must also be careful not to enter into any unnecessary close unions with non-believers if this can be helped (*2 Corinthians 6:14-18*). While we should not seek relationships with non-believers, except to instruct and bring them into the faith; we should not drive those away from us that are already bound to us unless they refuse to live peaceably. We should always seek to live peaceably with everyone whenever possible.

Quite often when we are speaking to potential converts, the question arises: “What if we are wrong?” This is an excellent question – much better than “you have your truth and I have mine” attitude. We believe that we are right because to the best of our ability we have searched for the truth in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church – the one and only Church established by Jesus Christ. We have looked into the doctrine and history of various religions and found that outside of the Catholic Church they are all failing the test of truth in one area or another. With full confidence in the Words of God, we believe that in searching for the Truth we find It, in knocking He opens to us, in asking He gives to us (*Matthew 7:7-8*). However, if we are mistaken, it is truly an honest mistake and our hope is that God will be merciful to us because we have loved and not hated those who are opposed to us. We have worked to put aside all malice and hatred approaching everyone, even our enemies, with true charity. Love covers a multitude of sins (*1 Peter 4:8*).



# PEOPLE ARE NOT PRODUCTS

*Bishop Giles, OFM*

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Just about everything that God has given us is a two-edged sword. Things can be used well and for our eternal advantage, or they can be used wrongly and lead us into eternal suffering. It is not what God has made that is bad, it is our ill use of these things. Food and drink are good, but gluttony is sinful. The disorder lies within us rather than in any objective thing outside of ourselves.

In the world, we see many great advantages with industrialization and assembly-line manufacturing. These things allow us to inexpensively mass produce things so that they all meet a certain minimal specification. Our automobiles, household appliances, electronics, etc. are mass-produced and therefore are readily available to many. These are usually of good quality and are useful to the extent of their minimal stated purposes.

However, these items off the shelf often pale in comparison to custom-built things. Customized things usually show some craftsmanship and are something that the artisan or

craftsman takes great pride in producing. There is a bit of the maker displayed in his work, which is typically not discernable in mass-produced things.

Our attention was drawn to the downside of industrialization by the many problems showing forth from commercial farming. Small dairies are all being run out of business. There are frequent massive recalls on food items throughout large portions of the country. Someone wrote many years ago concerning the decline of the honeybee that the problem was having one person with a thousand hives where cross-contamination of disease and parasites is inevitable. He suggested that instead of one man with a thousand hives, it would be better to have a thousand men with one hive each. The hives would then be stationary — not constantly moving from one crop to another — thus, any problems would be small and localized. Therefore, they are usually contained and corrected easily. In our massive acres of mono-crops, it only takes one disease or parasite to wipe out a large

portion of our food supply. If we had more small farms where produce is grown and consumed locally much of the downside of industrialized farming would be avoided. Of course, there is a premium to pay for things produced on smaller scales. Small farms cannot compete commercially against large factory farms. However, there is likely a better (maybe healthier) produce. We get what we pay for.

On another note, many of us were raised with the economic principle to support the local businessman, the local farmer, rather than distant businessmen. Charity begins at home. If we pay more for things produced locally, it is an initial burden, but it is repaid with an improvement in the local economy. What benefits our neighbor farmer or businessman ultimately benefits us as well. What benefits the business far away is usually only a drain on the local economy. Everyone leaves the farm and we have more and more derelict properties – lowering everyone’s property value.

There is a lot to be said for having a “global” economy, but we need to also consider the local cost. Is cheaper prices for goods worth the cost

of driving work and jobs out of our local communities? It seems we need to understand that the human factor is more important than the money we spend. Creating local jobs in farming and business, which can honestly support a family, should be our consideration and goal when we use our purchasing power.

The human factor is more important than any material factor. Our workers should be able to take pride in their work and have a much greater reward than a paycheck at the end of the week. Too often, our workers are not dedicated and have little if any interest in doing their best work. There is no recognition or monetary reward for this in factory work. The laborer needs to take pride and ownership and receive the satisfaction from doing a good job. He needs to be more than just a machine or a cog in a machine. He is made in the image and likeness of God. He is different from everyone else, he is important – as a person. He is not an expendable part of a machine.

Sadly, we have historically failed to recognize and develop the unique personalities, qualities, and talents of people. Workers have been reduced to identical cogs to be

put into the economic machine until they are worn out and then simply discarded and replaced. Many of our institutions have modeled themselves on this industrial assembly line in their the mentality of caring for and educating our children. We have nice sounding catch-phrases that often appear very sinister under closer scrutiny. For example, we hear: "No child left behind." In our education system, we will keep every child moving on the assembly line. In order to accomplish this, we must have all the parts (children) moving on this assembly line as nearly identical as possible. In accomplishing this we see that the standards must be constantly lowered to accommodate the slowest or the least efficient part (person) from being left behind or discarded. Those moving ahead faster or more efficiently need to be retarded (slowed down), otherwise they disrupt the constant steady speed of the entire process.

We should not be striving to produce identical robots, but rather we should be promoting the development of varied and exceptional talents (God-given gifts). This seems to work better in artisan shops with masters and apprentices rather

than in assembly education. Having taught in a small school, the thought has often occurred that God gave children to parents to raise, not to teachers (not even religious brothers and sisters), or the state, or business. Parents should know their children better than anyone. They should form their hearts and minds in the direction God is calling them to. The impulse to conform to others is too often taken to too far of an extreme. The "professionals" are good at what they do in turning out a uniform and consistent class of children year after year. What is mostly to be deplored is that so much creativity, uniqueness, and independence is suppressed if not destroyed.

In the end, what we find is a communist "classless" world. All workers are the same and equal. There is no place for God or religion, no place for any of the special talents that God has endowed various people with. While this industrialization of people may appear appealing to many, it is alarmingly frightful to God-loving Christians. If God wanted us alike, He would have made us alike.

As frightening as the destruction of true humanity is in the realm of material things, it is

even worse when we consider the soul and the eternal ramifications. The children coming off the assembly line do not believe in God, they do not consider that they have any unique God-given talents, they have no ownership in their work. They often do their work out of necessity or for a paycheck rather than out of responsibility or love.

In our Lenten self-denial, we are focused upon the mortification of bodily desires. Our goal is not the destruction of persons, but of sins. We can produce a herd of cows that produce the same consistency of milk or meat while being consistent in all their requirements and thus make our lives easier. If we strive to treat people like factory animals, we may succeed to an extent in this life, but there is an utter failure in eternity. Not everyone in Hell suffers to the same degree. As there are many mansions in Heaven, so there are many levels in Hell.

We must strive to personalize our mortifications, our prayers, and devotions for ourselves and our children. However, we must also conform to the rituals and ceremonies Jesus has given us in the Sacraments. We are all human and made in the image and likeness of God but we are

not all of the same intelligence, build or ability. Each of us is called upon to reflect specific attributes of God, then when we unite together with Him, we find beauty and completeness in the complementariness brought about by our differences.

What we need are not bigger and better people factories, but rather holier families. We need families that will produce saints of every description: mystics, contemplatives, missionaries, doctors, etc. This Lenten Season let us investigate the hearts of ourselves, our children and our families. What special gifts has God given us and how can we best develop them and give greater honor and glory to God?

The measure of our lives is not in comparison with others of the same age and station in life. Our Ideal, our Goal, is Jesus Christ. We must strive to develop the spiritual gifts that God has given to us as near to the state of perfection as possible.



# THE RELIGIOUS LIFE: A LABOR OF LOVE

*Bishop Giles, OFM*

---

When we enter the Franciscan Order, we humbly beg to be admitted to a life of penance for the love of God. The world cannot understand the desire to live a life of penance because the world does not have this love of God. It is love that motivates us in self-denial and mortifications. Without love, we soon grow tired and become agitated or restless. The daily routine of prayer, work, or study quickly turns to monotony and drudgery unless there is something deeper and stronger to keep us motivated. When true love of God is our motivation, we find that the daily prayers are very much “ever ancient, ever new.” When our labors are offered as service to the King of Kings, they are filled with joy and we become eager, not only to do them but to do them well.

The Religious life is not for everyone. God calls those whom He wills to this life. Many others are called to the single life or the married life in the world. A few, however, are given the grace to renounce the world and all its pomp and enter humbly and meekly into the service of God.

Our physical lives are not much different from anyone else’s. We must work, study, cook, clean, etc. to care for our bodies, but these labors are super-naturalized in the hearts of good religious. From the beginning to the end of our day and every hour in between is imbued with prayer. We have community prayers at regular intervals and private devotions in our leisure. There is order and regularity so that we know what we are to do simply by consulting the clock and our schedule. This quickly becomes tiring and boring unless we have a stirring motivation from deep within our hearts. What keeps the religious going is a bit of will power given by the grace of God, but mostly it is the love that God has filled his heart with. Love makes all things sweet and joyful even the lowliest tasks and duties.

The humble sister or brother quietly sweeping, dusting, cooking, or washing often finds his heart is filled with unexplainable joy and satisfaction. He begins with a desire to practice penance and mortification but soon finds his soul is overflowing with

pleasure. On the surface of things, our poverty and humility attract the compassion and sympathy from many in the world. The soul of a religious is filled with compassion and sympathy for those in the world. The worldly man is truly to be pitied. For the love of material gain, he has lost the greatest and only true pleasure and joy in serving God. In the pursuit of material pleasure, the worldling's soul is left starving and he does not even realize it. The religious discovers that in the renunciation of material things, his soul is filled with much greater joy – so much so that it pours over and brings true joy into everything, no matter how poor or insignificant it may appear.

Many approach the religious life but soon turn away or must be sent away – many are called, but few are chosen. We often read of the spiritual joys that the saints have written about and imagine that these will be ours from the moment we enter the religious life. A great many souls leave before their postulancy ever truly begins because they are asked to sweep the floor or wash the dishes. It seems that they imagined that they would spend their day in talking about spiritual things or in the heights of spiritual ecstasy –

not in humble labors. It is sad to see, but we let them return to the world because they do not have a true spirit of sacrifice. They were not ready to give of themselves, they only wanted to receive from God. They imagined that they were some kind of royalty or a spoiled child to be served and taken care of.

The religious spirit asks to serve and to sacrifice and willingly embraces even the lowliest of duties knowing full well that he is unworthy of any dignity or station. This cannot be just words but must truly be in his heart. When this grace from God is found in a soul it is a sign of a religious vocation. The irony of it, however, is that the humble and lowly religious soon finds the greatest joy and satisfaction from all his labors because he does them for God, with God, and in God. When we come thinking that we deserve something good we often must leave with nothing. When we come thinking we do not deserve anything but suffering and lowliness, then we obtain Everything.

We begin our religious lives with eagerness, but we must soon be put to the test and tried. It is in the face of difficulties, humiliations, or sacrifices that our true motives

begin to emerge. We don't enter religious life because we are perfect. On the contrary, we enter the religious life because we are sinners and are unworthy, but we hope for the mercy of God so that we may amend our lives. Our lives are the constant pursuit of holiness. In the religious life, we can make greater and faster progress than we can in any other life, but it is still advancing rather than obtaining. It is only at the end of this life (religious or otherwise) that we are to be rewarded.

In advancing every day through our trials and temptations, we are not yet in the state of perfection, but God gives us foretastes of this perfection or glory and we find an unexplainable joy in our hearts even when the world would think we should be miserable and pitied. It takes courage and strength to persevere, but if we desire and are willing to humbly persevere, God will give us the graces necessary to do so. This desire and willingness find their deeper source in the love of God. The scarcity of religious vocations is a barometer that shows us the level of true love of God that is in the world. Perhaps, now we can understand St. Francis of Assisi as he wept and prayed: "Love is not loved!"

Let us pray for and encourage our young people to once again stir up that love and devotion in their hearts so that they may receive and heed the call of God and give themselves completely to Him. We should strive to instill in the hearts and minds of children the grace of perseverance. Our society is too quick to give up at the first sign of difficulties. The path to Heaven is narrow, steep, and difficult, but it is also long. We must be ready, willing, and able to continue no matter what the obstacle. It is hard work, but it is a labor of love. There is great value and even the greatest of rewards when we finally reach the End. It is not enough to begin and then start looking back. "The man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is not worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven." (*Luke 9:62*)

The world needs to make more saints to fill the rest of the places in heaven. Religious are needed to advance this work in themselves, but also in others. The world is filled with evil examples, we need to bring forth some good examples.

This work is not for everyone. For those who have been called and chosen, it is the only work.

# IS GOD CALLING YOU?

*“Be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God.”*

*Romans 12:2*

*Do you love serving God and neighbor?*

*Do you find yourself increasingly unsatisfied by the life of the world?*

*Do you yearn for something more?*

*Not all of us are meant for marriage or a life in the world. Some souls are set aside by God for special tasks. These are the souls that find joy and contentment in the religious life or sacred priesthood.*

*Do not be deterred by what you think you know or by what the world tells you. Find out for yourself. If you feel called, then at least learn more.*

*Any happiness we may have on earth and all the joy we hope for in heaven depend on answering God’s individual call for us. The sooner we do His Will, the happier we will be.*





# THE SUNDAY SERMON

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# THE FAMILY: THE WAR CONTUNUES

*Father Joseph Noonan, OFM*

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## PART III

As the family continues to be attacked from all sides, only the astute person will understand what is taking place. There are some who do have a correct understanding of this war for the souls of the family, and for the family itself. In recent years, the war has taken on a whole new set of enemies. One is not to be blamed if he didn't see this coming fifty years ago, but then, who would have thought the decline of the family would have happened so quickly.

Homosexuality and the so-called same-sex marriage battle came about as the result of the failure of the U. S. Catholic bishops and society to speak out and condemn the attacks of the family over the past century. These enemies of God and Natural Law are attacking from multiple fronts, making it difficult for those who are still willing to fight this ongoing war. Artificial contraception and abortion produced promiscuity on a scale never seen before. Pornography fed this fire until it became a raging out-of-

control forest fire. All of this opened the door for the acceptability of homosexuality.

This moral perversion has affected the minds of the parents by influencing either the man or woman to leave the family and live with someone of the same sex. Yes, they went from being a married spouse with children to a homosexual that is willing to give up their marriage and children. One supposes the war analogy would be like having an atomic bomb dropped on the family. Is there anything left of the family?

Then you have the children who are being brainwashed to believe that homosexuality is perfectly normal. The big lie, of course, is that they are born this way. Over time an increasing number of schoolchildren began to think they are homosexuals. Students at all levels must face either homosexual teachers in the classrooms who are promoting this perversion or teachers and administration who are permitting sympathetic teachers to again indoctrinate these young, gullible minds. The

only real solution at the present time is to not send your children to public schools.

The harm being done to the family is simply devastating. When the Supreme Court is allowed to redefine marriage, one now has a court that has placed itself above Natural Law and God Himself. This is plainly a level of arrogance of a human court that can only bring further destruction to what remains of the family.

The more recent transgender issue is a not-so-quiet attack upon Divine Providence. To say that God “got it wrong” when He determined the gender of a person is actually blasphemy. Once again, these human devils have quickly allowed this in the classroom. The result is that one now has young children under the age of ten wanting a gender change. The greater tragedy here is that mindless, clueless parents display their parental irresponsibility by allowing their child to go through this supposed transformation.

It is no surprise that one is already witnessing the destructive psychological effects of these changes. Whether children or adults who go through these changes, once having understood their

terrible decision, are able to recover is to be seen. One has seen a similar situation among those who have realized their mistake and stopped living a homosexual lifestyle. It is these persons who understand the lies which have been told in order to further this diabolical agenda and expose the truth to those who are willing to listen. Unfortunately, one must deal with a complicit media who is going to either downplay this news or refuse to print it all together.

One cannot overlook the attack upon parenthood. How often has one seen movies or television programs mock fatherhood, making men look like bumbling idiots and otherwise irresponsible fathers; mothers who find raising children to be boring, aggravating and a waste of their time? The family rarely has more than one or two children. How long has it been since a family was portrayed in a positive manner?

Today there are fewer marriages and more men and women living in sin outside of marriage. These adults give no thought to raising illegitimate children. The dishonor means little to them. The birth rate in the United States has been below the ability to sustain its

native population because of artificial contraception and abortion for a number of years which explains why the federal government is willing to admit millions into this country legally.

The divorce rate has been around fifty percent for many years, leaving tens of millions of children in broken homes. How many of these children have been put on some type of drugs because of the “mental” problems they have? How many of these school shooters have been from broken homes?

Catholic couples need to understand the battles they are fighting or will fight. It is imperative that they know who the enemies are? They need to properly understand the moral issues facing the family and what the correct answers are to these serious situations. Most of all they need to have a desire to live as Catholic parents who pray each day for God’s blessings on their family, avoid all immoral decisions, and persevere in raising their children to be saints.



*“The Rosary is the most beautiful and the most rich in graces of all prayers; it is the prayer that touches most the Heart of the Mother of God...and if you wish peace to reign in your homes, recite the family Rosary.”*

*~Pope St. Pius X*

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# THE LITURGICAL YEAR WITH ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

*Father Anthony Lentz, OFM*

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## *Septuagesima & Lent*

*“During the days of Septuagesima and Lent, our Holy Mother the Church over and over again strives to make each of us seriously consider our misery, so that we may be urged to a practical emendation (correction) of our lives, detest our sins heartily and expiate them by prayer and penance. For constant prayer and penance done for past sins obtain for us divine help, without which every work of ours is useless and unavailing.”*

*- Encyclical Letter “Mediator Dei”  
from Pope Pius XII*

It could seem strange for His Holiness to pair together the seasons of Septuagesima and Lent, but before we question him let us examine their connection. Both are in fact penitential seasons. Lent however is the Church’s penitential season proper; whereas Septuagesima may be viewed as the time of preparation for Lent. Since it is less well known, it would be wise to take the time to review the Septuagesima Season. Here we can better appreciate

the significance that Pope Pius XII puts upon its connection with Lent, and hopefully learn from it.

Septuagesima season lasts for two weeks and a half, and includes Septuagesima Sunday, Sexagesima Sunday, and Quinquagesima Sunday. It begins on Septuagesima Sunday and lasts until Shrove Tuesday (the day before Ash Wednesday), the dates of which depend upon which Sunday Easter falls. This short season gives us a twofold instruction. First is a *historical lesson*, connecting us with our Christian past, and second is a *spiritual lesson*, the necessity of repentance.

The historical lesson can be introduced by a simple question, *why is this season called Septuagesima?* The word itself means *seventy*, and for the rest of the answer I will consult the book *Goffine’s Devout Instructions on the Epistles and Gospels (1896 edition)* and quote its explanation:

*“According to the First Council of Orleans, in the year A.D. 545, many pious ecclesiastics and lay persons*

of the primitive Church used to fast seventy days before Easter, and their fast was called, therefore, *Septuagesima*, a name which was afterwards retained to distinguish this Sunday from others. The same was the case with the three following Sundays; many Christians beginning their fast sixty days before Easter, whence the name *Sexagesima*; others fifty days, whence *Quinquagesima*; others forty days, whence *Quadragesima*.” (page 75)

This begs the question, “Why did the first Christians fast seventy day?” To this Goffine replies, “*Alcuin and Amalarius* (two medieval clergymen, theologians, and historians) say that the captivity of the Jews in Babylon first suggested it; for as the Jews were obliged to do penance seventy years, that they might thereby merit to return into the promise land, so Christians sought to regain the grace of God by fasting for seventy days.” (page 75) See how wonderfully this also connects us with the holy persons of the Old Testaments and the Mosaic Law. It is a testament that Our Lord indeed did not come to destroy the Old Law, but to fulfill it.

The spiritual lesson can be noticed by certain significant

changes and omissions to the Liturgy. The altar is not ornamented with flowers nor relics, and the color for the season is violet, the color of penance and suffering. The Church omits all joyful chants from the Liturgy, such as the *Te Deum, Alleluia, and Gloria in Excelsis*. These changes and omissions are to constantly remind the sinner (us) of the grievousness of his errors and exhorts him to penance. This is how the Church will remain until the celebration of Our Lord’s Resurrection on Easter Sunday. The penitential theme intensifies with Lent. Pius XII reminds us of the importance of meditating upon the misery of our exile by, “*a practical emendation (correction) of our lives, detest our sins heartily and expiate them by prayer and penance.*”

Now we turn to St. Francis.

What lessons can we learn from the Poverello about these penitential seasons? St. Francis lived a penitential life, so the examples are too numerous to record here. All we need to do then is examine the man himself, and we can learn much by his religious asceticism. It may be at this point, my dear reader, that you are wondering what exactly is “asceticism.” You may have heard the word, but perhaps

never actually learned its meaning. The truth is that you could get a variety of definitions; which are all essentially the same, but some are more precise than others. Fancy technical terms will do us no good! We must have a definition that we can understand plainly. Fortunately for us G.K. Chesterton gives a very simple and precise definition in book *Twelve Types*: "*Asceticism is a thing which in its very nature, we tend in these days to misunderstand. Asceticism, in the religious sense, is the repudiation of the great mass of human joys because of the supreme joyfulness of the one joy, the religious joy. But asceticism is not in the least confined to religious asceticism: there is scientific asceticism which asserts that truth is alone satisfying: there is æsthetic asceticism which asserts that art is alone satisfying: there is amatory asceticism which asserts that love is alone satisfying. There is even epicurean asceticism, which asserts that beer and skittles are alone satisfying. Wherever the manner of praising anything involves the statement that the speaker could live with that thing alone, there lies the germ and essence of asceticism.*" The reader may find it interesting

to know that this quote is taken from chapter five of Chesterton's book, and its title is *Francis*. This is very appropriate, but not surprising because Chesterton had a great devotion to St. Francis. Let's go on.

St. Francis indeed repudiated all earthly joys, for we have already studied in the last few articles how his early struggles were the means of strengthening him for his vocation. Throughout his entire religious life he continued to deny himself constantly of lawful earthly pleasures by practicing temperance and penance. This was not of a melancholy sort of practice, but one of great joy and excitement. He ran towards penance, prayer and fasting with as much, if not more, enthusiasm as the world runs towards pleasure. This practice of penance, including his observing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, was merely the physical manifestation of his asceticism, and not the reason or cause of it. This being so, where then do we find the germ and the essence of St. Francis' asceticism? We find it in a rich man's house. Thomas of Célando relates how Bernard of Quintavalle (later Brother Bernard) invited St. Francis to dine with him one

evening and to spend the night. Bernard wanted to put St. Francis' holiness to the test, so he arranged that they would share his master bedroom; and he stayed awake in order to see what St. Francis would do. I will let Brother Thomas finish the story in his engaging fashion: *"Therefore, St. Francis, who faithfully concealed the secrets of God, when he thought that the Lord Bernard was fast asleep, during the first part of the night, got out of bed and began to pray. Looking up to Heaven and raising his hands, he prayed with intense fervor and devotion, saying: 'My God and My All!' And he sobbed out of those words with so many tears and kept repeating them with such devout persistence that until*

*Matins he said nothing but 'My God and My All.'" (Little Flowers of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano; Part I)*

Listen to Pope Pius XII! Lay aside the world during this Lent, and take more time for prayer and meditation. Look to make amendments with God for your past sins, even if it is only the overcoming of one fault. Follow St. Francis' advice and look for some quiet place to pray; a place where your own religious asceticism can flourish. Imagine what a wonderful Lent it would be if we too could say, *"My God and My All,"* with not just words and pious sentiments, but with our very lives *"in spirit and in truth"* (*Gospel of St. John 4, 24*).



***"Be patient in trials,  
watchful in prayer, and  
never cease working."***

*~St. Francis of Assisi*

# ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

## *An Autobiography*

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### CHAPTER THREE

#### PAULINE ENTERS CARMEL

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I was eight and a half when Léonie left school and I took her place at the Abbey.<sup>1</sup> The girls of my class were all older than I; one of them was fourteen, and, though not at all clever, she knew how to impose on her companions. Seeing me, in spite of my years, nearly always first in class, and a favorite with all the nuns, she became jealous, and paid me out in a thousand ways. Naturally timid and sensitive, I was unable to defend myself, and took refuge in tears. Neither my little Mother nor Celine knew of these troubles, and, as I was not advanced enough in virtue to rise above them, I suffered a great deal.

Fortunately, I went home every evening, and then my spirits revived. I would climb on to Papa's knee, telling him what marks I had, and his caresses drove away all my troubles. It was with the greatest delight that I announced the result of my

first composition, for I had obtained full marks. In reward, I received a silver coin which I dropped into my moneybox for the poor, and nearly every Thursday I was able to put in another. Such kindnesses were in my case a real necessity: The Little Flower needed to strike its tender roots deeper and deeper into the dearly loved garden of home, for nowhere else could it find the nourishment it required.

Thursday was a holiday at the Abbey, but it was not like the holiday I had with you at *Les Buissonnets*, when I spent most of my time upstairs with Papa. Not knowing how to play like the other children, I felt myself a dull companion, and though I tried my best to do as they did, it was always without success.

After Celine, whom I found almost indispensable, I sought the company of my little cousin Marie, because she left me free to choose the games, I liked best. Already we were united in closest affection, as

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<sup>1</sup> *The Benedictine Convent at Lisieux.*

if God were showing us beforehand how one day in Carmel, we should both embrace the same religious life.<sup>1</sup>

At my uncle's house, we often played at being two austere hermits, with only a poor hut, a little patch of corn, and a garden in which to grow a few vegetables. We arranged that while one was attending to active duties the other was engaged in prayer, and thus

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<sup>1</sup> *Marie Guerin entered the Carmel of Lisieux, August 15, 1895, taking the name of Sister Mary of the Eucharist. She was remarkable for her spirit of poverty and her patience through long suffering. "I do not know if I have borne my sufferings well," she said in her last illness, "but it seems as though Thérèse were communicating to me her spirit of self-surrender, and I think her confidence is mine. Oh! if only like her I could die of love! It would not be surprising, since I belong to the legion of little victims she asked of God. Mother, if during my agony you see that my sufferings are preventing me from making acts of love, I beseech you to remind me of my desire. I wish to die saying, 'Jesus, I love Thee!'" This desire was realized. She died on April 14, 1905, being then in her thirty-fifth year, and her last words were: "I do not fear to die! . . . Oh, what peace! . . . We must not dread suffering, for He gives strength . . . My Jesus, I love Thee ! . . ."* [CARMEL.]

the hours went by in an unbroken contemplation of divine things. All was gone through in silence with religious gravity and decorum. The make-believe continued even in the street. There the two hermits would say the Rosary, using their fingers to count on, so as not to display their devotion before those who might scoff. One day, however, the hermit Thérèse forgot herself, and made a great sign of the Cross before eating a cake given her for lunch, with the result that some worldly folk smiled.

The desire of always doing the same thing sometimes carried us too far. One evening on our way home from school at the Abbey, we bethought ourselves of imitating the modesty of the hermits. "Lead me," I said to Marie, "I am going to shut my eyes." "So am I," came the answer.

*To Be Continued.....*



## Quotes from Pope St. Pius X

“I was born poor, I have lived poor, I wish to die poor.”

“No, truly, there is no road which leads to directly and so quickly to Modernism as pride.”

“Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven.”



*Pope Pius X (Italian: Pio X; born **Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto**<sup>[a]</sup>; 2 June 1835 – 20 August 1914) was head of the Catholic Church from August 1903 to his death in 1914. Pius X is known for vigorously opposing modernist interpretations of Catholic doctrine, promoting liturgical reforms and orthodox theology. He directed the production of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, the first comprehensive and systemic work of its kind*

# 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 7

##### THE GIFT OF ONESELF IN THE MIDST OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Not all souls pass their lives in the silence of a convent, surrounded by enclosure walls, protected against the influence of the world by the triple hedge of the religious vows. Most people live in the midst of the world in the whirlpool of business, engaged in a ceaseless struggle for their daily bread.

Exterior occupations claim all their attention. Imposed by obedience, commanded by necessity, or undertaken freely, these occupations are soon so many and so varied that they surpass the power of the soul.

Vainly she struggles to shake off this encumbrance; she cannot succeed in reconciling the spiritual life with this exterior agitation. Business matters, instead of being pervaded by the spirit of prayer, stifle this spirit, or cast it down beneath their weight. At last the weakened soul grows weary and declares that she is not made for the life of prayer.

To the hurry and the fever of work are added contradictions from even well-intentioned persons. There are difficulties inherent in the state of life which one has chosen, the duties with which one is charged. Exterior cares absorb the activities of the soul, dry up the heart, and finally bring disgust for the interior life.

O Jesus! Especially does this danger frighten me! I have seen so many dash against this rock and suffer shipwreck or fall miserably! Hast Thou called us into the wilderness and multiplied Thy wonders in order to leave us to perish? Can it be that the labors we have undertaken to please Thee can cause our ruin? O Jesus, do not permit this! Teach us how to pass over this Red Sea whose waves threaten to bear us away.

Souls of good will, what do you fear? Listen to the Voice of the Master. Certainly, the danger is serious, but not for docile souls.

Occupations are not an end in themselves. They are given to the soul as a means of proving her love for God. One should enter into them, therefore, but only to a certain degree.

If one can choose his tasks, one should take only those which cause little or no distraction from God. One must know how to use discretion. Among devout persons, there are those who, perfectly free to regulate their employments, to limit their occupations, are carried away by the ever-rising flood of their work. Who forces them to undertake so much? *No one*. Attraction stimulates them; natural activity goads them on; they are wanting in willpower to seize the reins; and they are

carried away by themselves as by unbroken steeds. Oh, poor imprudent souls! The precipice is not far away; it waits for them and will engulf them.

Who does not know of lamentable examples of falls and even of apostasy occasioned by immoderate ardor in work? It has caused the abridgment and then the suppression of vocal and mental prayer and the exercises of the interior life.

The wise man, on the contrary, constantly reminds himself that one thing is necessary: the gift of oneself to God. The Master has no further need of our services when they have become overeager.

If, impelled by some purely natural motive, we were to fill the world with the glory of our wisdom and astonish sages with the depth of our researches, if we should provoke the admiration and gratitude of nations by our eminent services, we should not procure as much glory for God as we could procure by a simple act of love.

Our vanity deludes us. We are not indispensable upon earth. God is able to govern His universe without us. When we have disappeared, the stars will continue their course in the immensity of space, empires

will fulfil their destiny upon earth, nations will dispute for the mastery upon the world's scene, the good and the bad will live side by side, the just will sanctify themselves, and the wicked will go to their destruction. By ourselves, what change can we effect? Our place here below is quite restricted and our influence very limited, unless we belong body and soul to God, unless we are absolutely docile instruments in His Hands, unless we renounce all self-will, unless we act only under the Divine impulse of Providence, Who deigns to make use of us to attain His purposes.

Then our action will be calm because it will be moderated; it will have lasting effect because it will be sweet; it will be fruitful because it will be divine.

But it rarely happens that the soul can choose her occupations. Obedience often imposes numerous and difficult tasks.

God permits that these labors surpass her strength and that, in spite of her good will, she does not succeed in finishing all of them in good time. Nevertheless, it is obedience that imposes them. How many poor souls are perplexed by this problem!

Yes, thy labors are imposed by obedience. God wills that thou shouldst apply thyself to them with care in order to acquit thyself well. He wills that thou shouldst not lose an instant in occupations that are not commanded. That done, thy duty is fulfilled. God does not exact hurry; on the contrary, He forbids it. He desires that thou shouldst act according to the measure of thy strength, peacefully, without over-exertion, without agitation.

Take each action by itself and perform it as if thou hadst nothing else to do today. Work diligently, without laziness, without slowness; but do not be tormented by the desire of finishing. The first action done, raise thine eyes for a moment to the Divine Master; then begin another duty.

God wills that thou shouldst be occupied; He does not expect thee to achieve what is excessive. If there are tasks that thou art not able to finish in spite of the peaceful care and serious application thou givest them, be at rest; the Will of God is accomplished. Thou hast given everything today according to thy measure. Jesus is content.

Oh, I know that this may not be the judgment of men, and even that sometimes imprudent superiors exact more than God

demands and manifest their displeasure. It is a painful situation for a timorous soul who desires to please those who are placed over her, and yet not to weaken her spiritual life.

Wise superiors will never, by their own will, permit their subjects to be so perplexed; they will not forget that the temporal welfare of the monastery and the spiritual welfare of those outside ought to be secondary to the interior life of the souls that are entrusted to them. Work is not an end in itself. It is only an occupation which Jesus expects of us in so far as we can enter upon it with moderation.

As for the soul, her procedure is simple. She gives the full measure of her strength without being disquieted or pre-occupied. If, without her fault, she has left a task unfinished and must endure a reproach or submit to a humiliation, she welcomes this little cross as a mark of the special love of Jesus. Interior peace and self-possession are worth the sacrifice of the esteem and the affection of men. The soul thus gains a two-fold profit: she preserves interior peace in the midst of labor; she is kept in humility. In both cases, she renews the gift of her heart to God.

Some souls may choose their occupations; others live under obedience; others see their tasks indicated to them by their state in life, their social condition. Daily bread, the care of a family, important affairs, worries of all sorts, absorb the time and attention of the greater number of the people of the world.

Yet even here the soul of good will can escape from the danger that menaces her spiritual life.

She should remember the words of Jesus: "Why are you solicitous for the morrow? Why do you say: 'What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewith shall we be clothed?' After all these things do the heathens seek. As for you, you have a Father in Heaven. He knoweth you have need of all these things. Be not solicitous. The birds of the air sow not, neither do they reap; and My Heavenly Father feedeth them. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." This is the wisdom of the Gospel; this is the sweet Voice of Jesus reassuring the soul, His spouse.

My soul, be not hurried. Never allow thyself to be over-absorbed in affairs, however urgent and grave they seem.

Make it thy study to be moderate in all thy actions. Let thy movements, walk, manner of speaking be the reflection of a self-possessed soul. The exterior will react upon the interior; thou shalt always be calm and mistress of thyself.

If thou wert charged with the government of an empire, this ought not make thee lose thy repose of heart, for thou, my soul, art of more value than all the kingdoms of the earth.

Jesus refused the royal crown which the Jews offered Him. He disdained this valueless present; but He begs thee to make Him King of thy heart. Let Him reign there as Master. Appoint Him Steward over all thy goods; abandon to Him the care of thy interests; then love Him as much as thou canst. It shall never be said that the bride suffered hunger and thirst in the palace of the King, her Spouse.



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# FRANCISCAN SAINTS

**MARCH 20TH**

**Blessed John of Parma**

*Confessor, First Order*

John of Parma was the seventh general of the Franciscan Order and labored zealously during his administration to reanimate the spirit of the order. He was descended from the ancient noble family of the Buralli and was born at Parma in the year 1209. He was in high repute for learning and piety, and was professor of philosophy in his native city, when the love of God urged him to forsake the world and devote himself wholly to God in the Order of Friars Minor. At the time, he was twenty-five years of age. Already during his year of probation he was imbued with the spirit of our holy Father St. Francis; he loved poverty above all things, not only so far as the renunciation of external goods is concerned, but also in the sacrifice of his will and the esteem tendered him, so that he was a model of humility, abnegation, and self-sacrifice.

After his profession he was sent to Paris to complete his course in theology. After he was ordained to the priesthood, his

superiors employed him in the apostolic ministry. Then he was appointed professor of theology and acquitted himself of this task with remarkable success at Bologna, Naples, and Rome.

Pope Innocent IV convoked a general council in the city of Lyons in the year 1245. As Minister General Crescentius was unable to attend the council because of age and infirmity, he deputed Father John to go to the council in his stead. Here John won for himself the admiration of all the prelates of the Church with his wisdom, knowledge, and virtue, and the full confidence of the Sovereign Pontiff.

Two years later, when the pope himself presided at the general chapter of the Franciscan Order for the election of a general, the pope pointed out John as the man best qualified for the office. So, he was elected minister general of the order in 1247. Universal rejoicing reigned among the good religious, especially among the

surviving disciples of St. Francis. They trusted that the spirit of poverty and humility would bud forth anew, and they were not disappointed in their hopes.

As general of the order, John visited practically all the convents in the various countries. He always journeyed on foot, clothed in a poor habit, accompanied by only one or two friars. Sometimes it happened that he spent several days in a convent as an unknown guest and could without trouble observe everything that occurred before he revealed his identity. Everywhere he set the example of a perfect Friar Minor and made the best possible provision toward promoting religious perfection.

The pope, who called him an angel of peace, sent him as his legate to Constantinople to bring back the schismatic Greeks to Catholic unity. For two years John labored at this task with remarkable wisdom and much success. Upon his return he deemed it best that someone else be appointed to govern the order. This was in the year 1257. Upon the urgent request of his brethren, he named St. Bonaventure as a worthy successor. He it was who completed the work begun by his predecessor.

John now withdrew to a hermitage in Greccio, where he spent a life far more angelic

than human. One morning when the server failed to appear for his holy Mass, an angel came instead. John had spent thirty-two years in this solitude when he learnt that the Greeks who had been reconciled to the Church, had again relapsed into schism. Although he was then eighty years old, John was eager to undertake the journey to the East in order to restore unity. Pope Nicholas IV gladly assented to the design. But, arriving at Camerino, John felt that his end was near. He himself exclaimed: "Here is the place of my rest."

He received the last sacraments with great devotion, and departed this life on the twentieth of March, in the year 1289. Numerous miracles occurred at his grave. Even those who had formerly persecuted and calumniated him came to beg his forgiveness. Pope Pius VI beatified him in 1781.

## RENOUNCE & ENDURE

1.) Even worldly-wise heathens recognized with the faint light of reason that the secret of a perfect life is implied in the words: Renounce and endure. Blessed John of Parma found the source of happiness and holiness in these words. — We, too, must renounce, if we wish to be happy and to lead a life that will be pleasing to God. We must renounce the many inclinations that impel us to sensuality, avarice, and the love

of honor. By nature, man needs little to satisfy his needs; but cupidity is a glutton that will not be satisfied. If we wish to be happy, then, we must deny ourselves whatever the passions crave for. In order to be a servant of Christ, you must even deny yourself necessary things: "Every one of you that doth not renounce everything that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple" (*Luke 14:33*). — What progress have you made in renunciation?

2.) Just as we must renounce what our interior and inordinate desires crave for, so must we endure whatever occurs externally to cause us vexation. Heat and cold, hunger and thirst, fatigue and infirmity befall us in this earthly life ever since the day of original sin, and we must patiently endure them as universal punishment for sin. No man escapes them: "Man, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries" (*Job 14:1*). In his religious life as well as on his many journeys, Blessed John willingly submitted to innumerable hard-

ships; should we not, then, accept the necessary ones with patience? — How do you bear them?

3.) Consider that while we must suffer from the inclemencies of the seasons and the frailties of our nature, there is much more to endure from the people with whom we come in contact. But such things, too, we must suffer with patience. Others must bear with us, why should we not have to bear with their frailties? Particularly we shall have much to endure if we wish to lead others to do what is right. At the same time, we should modestly withdraw if we notice that others are more competent at such work. When Blessed John perceived that another was better able than he to conclude happily what he had begun, he withdrew and confined himself to ceaseless prayer that God's blessing might rest upon the labors of his successor. Nor was this blessing wanting. "The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth the spirit, than he that taketh cities" (*Prov. 16:32*).

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

*O God, who, in order to promote the honor of Thy name, didst bestow upon Blessed John invincible strength of soul, grant that we may merit the assistance of Thy almighty hand in attaining to the triumph of heavenly glory.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

# THE GREATEST TREASURE

*Reverend L. Chiavarino*

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## CHAPTER XIV

### WOE TO HIM WHO DOES NOT FULFILL THE OBLIGATION OF HAVING MASSES CELEBRATED FOR THE DEPARTED

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We have seen how great are the rewards which God gives to those who offer Mass for the faithful departed. In proportion to the greatness of his bounty are the chastisements which he inflicts upon those who fail in this sacred duty. Therefore, should these lines fall under the eyes of any of the race of misers, as St. Leonard calls them, who not only fail in charity by failing to offer Mass for the poor souls, but go even to the length of disregarding the claims of justice by refusing to carry out legacies for Masses, let me say to them: You are worse than the demons, for while the demons torment the

souls of the damned, you torment the souls of the elect. You are worse than barbarians because they injure only their enemies; you display cruelty toward the friends of God. For you, there can be no valid confession, no effective absolution, unless you do penance for your great sin and punctually satisfy your debt to the dead.

Let no one object: "There is no money... We cannot afford it..." For business, for luxuries, perhaps even to commit sin you can readily find money and you can always afford to spend it; but to satisfy your just debts to the souls of the poor dead you say: "There is

no money! We cannot afford it.”

Reflect that if there is no one on earth who balances and checks the accounts, you will have to balance them with God. If you divert and waste legacies and offerings for Masses left by those who have died, you are actually arousing God’s anger by your cruelty and injustice. The consequence is inevitable, as Holy Scripture assures us; you will call down upon yourself misfortunes of all sorts—the loss of health, wealth and honor; you will bring upon yourself ruin even in this world. And then? After an unfortunate life here you will fall into the hands of God by Whom you will be judged without mercy on account of your own injustice toward the faithful departed.

I will not linger to relate incidents telling of the ruin and misfortune which have come upon those who have failed to satisfy their obligations to the dead. Consider how many once-great families are dispersed, how homes have been ruined, how fortunes have been wiped out. Consider the cause of these calamities. If one could investigate far enough, one would often find the cause in the injustice done to the poor dead by those who neglected to carry out their last

wishes. But these, after all, are only temporal punishments. God reserves still greater torments for the next life, and very often he permits that those who have offended in this way will be treated in the same manner by their successors.

It is recorded in the Franciscan Chronicles that a friar appeared after his death to one of his former companions and told him of the terrible sufferings he was being subjected to in Purgatory because he had neglected the faithful departed, and that for a long period all the good works applied by his friends on earth to his soul had availed him nothing. Because of his neglect of the souls in Purgatory while he was living, these suffrages were now applied to those who had been neglected by him in life. Having said this, he disappeared.

Dear friends, let me once more exhort you to be diligent in helping the holy souls. Satisfy their debt to divine Justice, especially by means of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion. Above all, be most careful to carry out any legacies in favor of the souls in Purgatory, even if this be at the cost of sacrifices.

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