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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

CIRCULATION

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM

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TELEPHONE: (585) 621-1122

EMAIL: father@friarsminor.org

WEBSITES: friarsminor.org &
franciscanfathers.com

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THE SERAPH



YEA, LORD WE GREET THEE

Bishop Giles, OFM DD

We welcome the coming of God Our Savior. In our weakened and feeble state of sin, we can't draw near to God, so He has come to us. If we consider the state of mankind after the Fall, we see that we come into this world heading in the wrong direction. Our faces are turned away from God and consequently, all that we can see is nothingness and darkness. We stumble and fall groping around in the darkness for peace and happiness. It is always just out of reach. The devils lead us in this groping into ever-increasing darkness. The situation of mankind in this state was truly hopeless.

God in His mercy gave us hope. He promised a Savior to Adam just after the Fall. For all those many years of the First Advent, a few men kept alive the hope in the coming Messiah. With Christmas,

God has come in human form. He has given us His Church but then has left us when He ascended into Heaven. However, He has given us reason to hope once again. He will return.

Jesus Christ returns to us in every True Mass, hidden under the appearances of bread and wine, but truly present, nonetheless. At every true Mass, transubstantiation takes place and God humbles Himself and comes to meet us. The darkness remains for those who will not receive Him, but for those with the eyes of True Faith, Light, Life, Peace, and Joy has come to them.

We often wonder why it is that some can believe and see, while others cannot. It is not a matter of intelligence, wealth, strength, or any other human aspect. The rich Magi and the poor shepherds both saw Jesus in His Infant Humanity,

while the majority of those in Bethlehem knew nothing and saw nothing. The Life of the Light of the world was hidden from them and they remained in darkness. In this aspect, nothing has changed. A few are humble enough to believe and see, while the majority cannot or will not see.

As we grope around in sin, we experience some of the greatest darkness. Our bodies block the Light and cast a long shadow ahead of us. Many philosophers would have us see our bodies as an obstacle to seeing clearly and in the true light. Our bodies are not the enemy. Jesus has taken a body just like ours to show us that the flesh is not the problem. St. Paul shows us that material things are matters of indifference. It does not matter if we eat or fast, sleep or keep vigil, work, or play. He shows us — what is important our intentions and wills. Whatever we do, if we do it for the Love of God, is good and praiseworthy. The flesh of our bodies is only blocking the Light in our lives because our eyes are turned in the wrong direction. We are looking into the darkness created by our own shadow. All we need to do is turn around. A simple 180 degree

turn will have us in the Light and seeing clearly.

We only need to turn the other way, or do the opposite, of whatever the devils, the world, or our fallen passions entice us with. If we are tempted with anger and hatred, we simply need to turn this around and practice patience and love. The darkness of sin is rejected, and the light of grace enters our eyes. As we become more proficient in rejecting sin and practicing virtue, we begin to see the working and manifestation of God all around us. We could not see it while in sin, because we were selfishly focused upon ourselves — looking into the darkness of the shadow of sin. When we lift our eyes above ourselves and the dark shadow we are casting, we see more clearly. The best view, however, is when we completely turn around. This turning around, the spiritual writers call conversion. It is not a change in our natures, but rather a change in our perspectives and wills. The narrowness of self-love that is confined to its own shadow is rejected and the heart is opened to see so much more. The Presence of God is now seen everywhere. His Hand is

recognized in the sunshine and in the rain – the pleasures and in the pains of this life. This all brings joy to the heart of those who are walking in His Light.

The greatest of this joy is found in receiving Him into our bodies in Holy Communion. When we worthily receive Him, we are gradually transformed. The darkness of sin fades as the Light of Grace brightens and fills every aspect of our lives.

Our Liturgical Advent is given to us so that we can truly begin to see the darkness and emptiness of sin and selfishness. Disciplining our-

selves through penance and mortification we are not seeking to destroy our bodies, but rather open them up to receive True Life, Light, Peace, and Joy.

Especially on Christmas Day, let us spiritually, if not physically, receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist into our hearts and souls. Let us welcome Him and greet Him with pure hearts desirous of living forevermore in His Light and never returning to the darkness of our sins. This is the best of greetings that we can offer Him on this wonderful anniversary of His Birth.



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Christmas Day

“Let us go over to Bethlehem and let us see this word that is come to pass.”

Luke ii. 15.

O wondrous and ineffable love of God and My Lord Jesus Christ, wailing in the manger, Whom all the angels in heaven praise and worship! O what great thanks am I bound to render to the most loving Lord My Savior and My Redeemer, born for my salvation, Who refused not to be sheltered like a poor miserable man in a stable in the company of beasts. Certainly, I have no worthy praise-offering, but nevertheless I freely present Him a good will in sign of love and gratitude. What more? Shall I sing with the holy angels, or weep from compassion, thinking on the tears of the wailing infant? Each of these actions gives pleasure, each of these actions affords delight; both to weep with Jesus, and to praise Jesus with the angels. And all this I desire to do to the glory of God; and to humble myself before the eyes of His Majesty, Who humbled Himself even to the form of a little child. O Father of mercies and God of infinite goodness, I know in truth, I confess from the bottom of my heart, that in Thy sight I am a sinner of utter vileness, one who with downcast eyes, with groans and tears, should rather plead for mercy, than think of taking upon his polluted lips Thy most sweet name, and dare to praise it.

And yet, trusting in Thy loving kindness and in Thy unfathomable goodness, I long to praise Thee. Therefore, I dare to bless Thee, heavenly Father, Who didst send Thy beloved Son into the world for our redemption. I bless Thee, only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who to redeem us men didst assume our nature. I bless Thee, Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, Who didst gloriously and wondrously perfect all the mysteries of our redemption from the beginning unto the end. To Thee be infinite praise and glory, O supreme, eternal Trinity. Amen.

From the book: The Babe of Bethlehem by Thomas á Kempis

UNITY IS FOUND ONLY IN THE CHURCH

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD

The other churches have such good priests and people, why do we not unite with them? This question is the bane of our situation. What is wrong with these other sects of “sede-vacantists?” What is wrong with various “traditional” sects? What is wrong with the “Novus Ordo?” What is wrong with the Protestants? What is wrong with Jews and Muslims? What is wrong with the pagans and naturalists? Where do we begin?

There is no doubt that there is something good in all those groups. In some, there may be a lot of things that are true, right, or are good. If the people in these various sects were completely evil, they would not be here – they would be in Hell or God would never have created them.

Every lie or every evil has some element of good in it. If a lie did not have at least one element of truth in it, no one would believe it. If sin or evil did not present at least one element of good to us we would never consent to it. We

fall for lies, sin, or any other evil because we mistake an element of goodness for complete or true goodness.

We must learn to discern the evil that comes to us hidden under the cover of some good or apparent good. The wolf in sheep clothing is a nice example. The clothing of the sheep is good, and no one can deny this. The evil is the wolf hidden within the clothing. The evil of heresy only comes to us hidden within some obvious truth.

The late Bishop Louis Vezelis, OFM once compared heresy to a poisoned well. Ninety-nine percent of the water in the well is true and good water, but it is all rendered deadly by the one percent of poison. The heretic may be ninety-nine percent correct. With that, we have no problem. It is the one percent that renders it all dangerous to our souls. It is nearly impossible to separate the good water from the poison once it has been mixed. Similarly, it is nearly impossible to separate the heresy from what is true in the heretic. The heretic uses truth

but, in a wrong manner, to confirm his heresy.

The Church has always forbidden Her children from reading or listening to the teachings of heretics. In modern liberal minds, this seems very narrow-minded or even bigoted. Yes, the path to salvation is narrow and is very prejudicial to the broad and smooth path that leads to damnation. There is no compromising of truth with an error or the path to heaven with the path to hell.

To be a heretic or to be excluded from the Church and Heaven it is only necessary to obstinately deny one truth or promote one error. We are told that to deny one doctrine of the Church is to deny them all. It is a denial of Jesus Christ. The doctrines of the Church are not the doctrines of men but are the very teachings of God. If we label anything that God has given us as false, we essentially are calling Him a liar. If we reject His teaching, we reject Him and all that He says. With God, it is all or nothing. God is everything – away from God is nothingness. There is no halfway. We must accept and believe all that God has given us or turn away from Him and into the eternal emptiness or void.

The Catholic Church is the Bride of Christ. She is His Mystical Body. She is One with Him. Her doctrines are the teachings revealed to us by God. Outside of the Catholic Church, there is no salvation because outside of Her there is the ultimate denial of God. The dogmatic decrees of the Church are matters of eternal life and death. None of them are small or insignificant.

There are many and various things that we can put into our physical bodies that will kill us. Does it make any difference if it is a knife or a bullet that pierces through our hearts? Does it make any difference if we ingest arsenic or some other poison? The ultimate result is the same. The entire body is destroyed. The life of our soul is remarkably similar. Our souls can be destroyed by any one of several things. Worshiping any creature as if it were God (idolatry) will kill us. Denying the Trinity of God will do the same. Refusing to receive or believe in the Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist; or denying the Divine Maternity of the Blessed Mother – all effect the same thing. They all place us outside the Church and outside of salvation – they all cause death to the soul.

Many other sins lead to the damnation of souls, but we are here focused upon those that exclude from the life of the Church. Our personal sins do not expel us from the Church and can be forgiven if we truly repent of them. These sins against faith often cannot be forgiven because they are not believed to be sins. Darkness has been taken for light. When this happens, the light is rejected and avoided because it is painful to the weakened eyes; and is thus perceived to be evil.

In rejecting numerous sects, we are focused upon false beliefs and practices. We do not reject them because of individual sins. It is not because of adultery or theft that we refuse union with them. It is because of heresy, idolatry, or rebellion against the Church that we must remain aloof from them. We are all sinners – both those within the Church and those outside the Church. It may even be argued that those within the Church are greater sinners than those who are outside the Church. Those within should know better, should be making greater progress with all the graces available to them. It is said: “To whom much is given, much will be required.”

It is false beliefs that create the impenetrable barrier – not the personal sins of the people in those sects. We cannot unite and worship with Pagans because this is idolatry and is a rejection of the True God. We cannot unite with the non-Christian monotheist Jews or Muslims because this would equate to a denial of the Son of God – Jesus Christ. We cannot worship with Protestants because it would be equivalent to agreeing with them in the denial of one or more essential doctrines of the Church. We cannot worship with the “Modernist Catholics” or the “Novus Ordo Church” because that would equate to a denial of the tradition and doctrine of the Catholic Church. We cannot worship with various “Traditionalists” because they make a virtue out of disobedience – they openly and publicly promote their defiance and rebellion against their own head, their own pope. To worship with them is to accept an anti-pope as our head, even though they refuse to obey him. Their doctrine or practice of rebellion and disobedience is a false doctrine and is in contradiction to the very teachings of Jesus Christ. The various groups of “sede-vacantists” have one or other defects. Some are thinly

disguised “Traditionalists” as they conjecture a “material pope,” but not a “formal pope.” Many have association or origins with well-known Schismatic sects or have obtained dubious “sacred Orders.” Some reject the hierarchy of the Church and promote “independent” priests or churches. To worship with them is to swallow the poison that runs through their very veins.

We do not doubt that most of these present exceptionally beautiful ceremonies or liturgies, they say many things that are true and right. It is not what they do well that we condemn, it is the wrong belief(s) which occasionally and sometimes imperceptibly surface in their words or ceremonies that prevents unity. Unity with those outside the Church equates to dis-

unity with the Church.

We do not claim to be without sin or error. We are probably worse sinners than others. We are probably more ignorant and less capable than most. We stand not in judgment of leaders or men. We leave this to God. However, as a prince of the Church entrusted with continuing the life of the Church, we must boldly and strongly denounce all false doctrine that would sully the purity of the Faith and Our Holy Mother the Church. We denounce, not so much the individuals as we denounce the errors that various individuals promote. We pray for their conversion, not their damnation. We seek unity within the Church rather than outside of Her.

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PEACE ON EARTH

Father Joseph Noonan, OFM

Men of goodwill strive to find peace in their hearts and souls. This may take a lifetime or a single reception of the Sacrament of Penance. It should most importantly be understood that true supernatural peace is possible only through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The great tragedy of most men is their attempt to find peace in ways that are not possible. There is a philosophical principle that applies to this situation. It is “one cannot give what one does not have (possess).” This is simply to be understood that there is nothing in this world that can give peace to men.

Through the years men have wanted to find peace through various material goods (money, cars, homes, clothes, jewelry, etc.) Others try to find it through a position (politics or a job, career, etc.). Still, others will steal, abuse men or women, drugs, or alcohol. It ought to be obvious to the discerning soul that none of this has the means to bring peace to a soul.

Catholics, at times, will struggle in finding peace

because they have refused to confess their sins. It is sad that any Catholic would stay away from the Sacrament of Penance for months, and worse yet, years. This is to be understood correctly, i.e., when the Sacrament is readily available. The harm which ensues cannot be quantified because one is speaking of spiritual damage.

How many Catholics have fallen away because of the guilt of their sins and the unreasonable fear and shame of confessing these sins? Satan understands very well how to produce an exaggerated fear in the mind of the Catholic. This is accomplished by manipulating the imagination. If Satan can convince a person that his sins are worse than the reality, or works on his sinful pride, he may keep the person from doing the one thing which is necessary to bring peace to the soul. How different the world would be if all Catholics regularly (at least monthly) confessed their sins and made an honest attempt to amend their life? Would it be safe to say there would be no fallen-away or apostate Catholics?

Peace on earth must necessarily begin with peace in the hearts and souls of the faithful and clergy. The conversion of the world is the only true way for men to stop fighting and for the Prince of Peace to reign triumphantly.

Many make the mistake of believing that it would take a large army to bring about peace. Their idea of peace is when the bullets stop flying and bombs are not dropped. This is precisely how not to obtain peace.

The lessons of Lepanto find relevance in the twenty-first century. The Catholic Navy was greatly outnumbered in the sixteenth century. Militarily, there was little chance for the Catholics to win this battle. Once Pope St. Pius V called upon the Catholics of Rome to pray the Rosary for victory, it changed the balance of power, although few would have realized it at the time.

Why is it that so many wait until a war has begun before prayers are said? If Catholics prayed to prevent war before the shooting begins, perhaps the world would have had fewer wars.

When the Blessed Mother appeared at Fatima, one of the things she told the children was to spread the message of

prayer and penance to avoid another war. This message was not properly disseminated and the result was a world war worse than the first one. Consider the magnitude of those instructions. If men would pray and do penance a war could have been prevented. One wonders how many Catholics heard those instructions and flippantly dismissed them. The lack of faith among those who heard the message and the bishops who did not properly spread the message resulted in a war like no other. If men truly desire peace, they must do that which is necessary to maintain or bring about a holy peace. Prayer and penance are a small price to pay.

One must remember there are many evil men in the world. They do not want peace. They work for war upon war. Some do this to obtain more and more power; others do it to get rich; still, others want both. They realize the chaos which is created in war makes it possible for them to accomplish their evil goals. These types of men care little for human life. The death of millions is of little consequence to them. The deplorable conditions of the common person make it possible for them to make

millions more in the rebuilding process after the war ends. Their goal is wealth, unbridled wealth, gained in whatever manner possible. These are NOT men of peace!

During the Holy Season of Christmas many speak of peace. One hears that Our Lord is the Prince of Peace in sermons and hymns. Do they truly understand what that title means, or is it simply a nice sounding thought for Christmas? Why is it that so many are kind and pleasant during the Christmas Season, but seem to shed this superficial virtue once the Holy Season has passed? For those who conduct themselves in this manner, the spiritual lessons of Christmas are generally wasted on them.

It is only through Our Lord that peace will come to this world. Any efforts to accomplish peace without Our Lord are a waste of time and

misleading. The world finds itself in the present situation precisely because it has made every effort to eliminate Christ and His Kingship from the face of the earth. It is folly to think leaders of nations can find true solutions to problems without Christ.

The secularization of Christ's Birth and this Holy Season promote an attitude that is pagan on one hand and evil on another. Catholics should have a good grasp of the dealings of those who are evil and avoid all participation in their diabolical work. One should not be fooled by lies and half-truths. Understand what is at stake in this ongoing spiritual war. Your soul is at stake. More importantly, the Kingship of Christ needs to be acknowledged to bring about true and everlasting peace. A peace which is so elusive, but yet so vital to finding peace within one's soul.



“Put the glory of God before everything. Let the infinitely good God be the end of your words, your thoughts, and your actions.”

~St. Ignatius Loyola

THE CHURCH HISTORIAN

Father Anthony Lentz, OFM

The Christmas Truce of 1914

On December 7, 1914, just roughly five months after the outbreak of World War I, His Holiness Pope Benedict XV begged for a hiatus from the War during the Christmas celebration, asking "*that the guns may fall silent at least upon the night the angels sang*". All governments of the world ignored the pope's pleading and would not authorize an official cease-fire, but where governments failed, individual men succeeded! This is the story of the "Christmas Truce of 1914." It was an unofficial impromptu armistice begun by the soldiery that occurred during World War I and took place at various points along the western-front.

The Great War

World War I, or the Great War, was the world-wide conflict between the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire) and the Allied Powers (Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan, and the

United States). It began on July 28, 1914, and ended on November 11, 1918.

The three main reasons given for the start of the War were: 1) *imperialism*, the process of a country gathering colonies and making them its own, 2) *nationalism*, the thought that a person's country and policies were superior to any other, and 3) *alliances*, a country's agreement to one or more countries that they will protect each other if ever in need. Along with these three general reasons is a fourth particular reason – the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. The assassination seems to have been merely the final blow that sparked the Great War, not the main cause as some would have it seem. If we take a closer look into these four reasons we can discern their common element, that is, they are essentially political. They were of great importance to those in power, but with exception of nationalism, they would probably have been un-

relatable to the ordinary citizen and soldier. The leaders would then have to use other methods to ensure the support of the populace.

At the very beginning of the War, the attitude of the soldiery, many of whom were young men just volunteering, was almost playful. It was as if they were merely going to compete in the football (soccer) match. Such enthusiasm, however strong, would not sustain them through the gruels of combat, and their high-command had to implement more effective motivations. Both the Central

Forces and Allied Force resorted to using propaganda to demonize the enemy, for they understood that hatred was a more powerful incentive to fight. One such example of propaganda was the lie that the Germans were stabbing Belgium babies with their bayonets and raping Belgium women. If they could make their soldiers view the enemy as not even being human, then they would be more willing to kill. These types of methods, however false, would ensure the support of the people.

During the first months of the War, the German soldiers



were advancing towards Paris through Belgium but were stopped by both British and French forces at the *First Battle of the Marne* in early September 1914. The Germans eventually were pushed back to the Aisne Valley and the British-Franco forces retreated towards Flanders, resulting in a stalemate. By November 1914 several trenches were dug along the area between the North Sea and the Swiss frontier, which became known as the "Western Front". The trenches of opposing armies were in relative proximity to each other and that space between them was known as "no man's land". December was fast approaching and the repeated promises made to the soldiers that the War would be over before Christmas were not going to be kept. Christmas was going to be spent on the Western Front.

Christmas Time During the War

The life of a soldier is not easy, even in the best of times. During World War I the soldiers had to endure grueling physical sufferings, such as harsh weather conditions, influenzas, frostbite, gangrene, and constant hunger. The

mental and spiritual hardships inflicted upon them were even greater. There was a constant fear of death; the witnessing of the deaths of friends, and having to cope with the reality of taking another human life. These types of experiences change a person and they can make a man forget what it feels like to be normal, or rather to be human. Considering these conditions, would it have been so terrible for the governments of the world to listen to the plea of Pope Benedict XV, and to allow the soldiers to celebrate the Most Holy Night of Christmas in peace?

Even though they ignored the pope, it would be wrong to not mention the efforts that the governments did take to make the soldiers' Christmas a little more "merry." Both sides had their citizens send care-packages to the soldiers. The items they sent varied. Examples were: cigarettes, chocolates, letters, decorations, liquor, and other similar items. Kaiser Wilhelm sent Christmas trees to his German troops on the front line. The point of all this was to boost the men's morale, but it ended up having the reverse effect. The gifts and presents made the soldiers miss the comforts of home, the time

with family, and all the Christmas festivities. The closer it came to Christmas Day the worse the men felt. None of the soldiers, from either side, knew what to expect. Would they have to take another life on Christmas? Would they have to fight on the day that we celebrate Our Messiah being born into this world? Perhaps they were hoping for an angel to come to them, like with the shepherds. Perhaps this angel would bring them tidings of great joy, such as telling them that the war was over and they can go home. This did not happen, but what did occur was nearly as miraculous.

A Silent Night, A Holy Night

It was Christmas Eve and the British soldiers were resting within their trenches, dreaming of home and family. As midnight was approaching they heard an unexpected sound coming from the German trenches, it was singing. The Germans were singing "Silent Night," in their native tongue. Soon afterward the British soldiers joined them, singing the same song in English. All through the night they were singing and shouting Christmas wishes to

one another! When morning came they met each other out in "no man's land," extending the same wishes face to face. The entire day was spent fraternizing, telling stories, sharing provisions, the Germans were putting up their Christmas trees and, in some places, they were playing a friendly game of football (or soccer). The truce also gave the soldiers from both sides the opportunity of honoring their dead, by giving them a proper burial and praying for their souls. Both sides helped each other with this noble gesture, once again seeing each other as fellow men, fellow Europeans.

Here are some eye witness accounts of the extraordinary events of that Day:

Graham Williams of the Fifth London Rifle Brigade: *"First the Germans would sing one of their carols and then we would sing one of ours, until when we started up 'O Come, All Ye Faithful' the Germans immediately joined in singing the same hymn to the Latin words Adeste Fideles. And I thought, well, this is really a most extraordinary thing – two nations both singing the same carol in the middle of a war."*

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (24 and 25 December) 1914, Alfred Anderson's unit of the 1st/5th Battalion of the Black Watch was billeted in a farmhouse away from the front line. Anderson recalls:

"I remember the silence, the eerie sound of silence. Only the guards were on duty. We all went outside the farm buildings and just stood listening. And, of course, thinking of people back home. All I'd heard for two months in the trenches was the hissing, cracking and whining of bullets in flight, machine gun fire and distant German voices. But there was a dead silence that morning, right across the land as far as you could see. We shouted 'Merry Christmas', even though nobody felt merry. The silence ended early in the afternoon and the killing started again. It was a short peace in a terrible war."

Captain Robert Miles of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, who was attached to the Royal Irish Rifles: *Friday (Christmas Day). We are having the most extraordinary Christmas Day imaginable. A sort of unarranged and quite unauthorized but perfectly understood and scrupulously*

observed truce exists between us and our friends in front. The funny thing is it only seems to exist in this part of the battle line – on our right and left we can all hear them firing away as cheerfully as ever. The thing started last night – a bitter cold night, with white frost – soon after dusk when the Germans started shouting 'Merry Christmas, Englishmen' to us. Of course, our fellows shouted back and presently large numbers of both sides had left their trenches, unarmed, and met in the debatable, shot-riddled, no man's land between the lines. Here the agreement – all on their own – came to be made that we should not fire at each other until after midnight tonight. The men were all fraternizing in the middle (we naturally did not allow them too close to our line) and swapped cigarettes and lies in the utmost good fellowship. Not a shot was fired all night.

Captain Miles's account was printed in the *Daily Mail* newspaper post mortem, for he died in action on December 30, 1914, just five days after the Truce. This must have been the fate of many others, in a War that continued for nearly four more years. Attempts were made to repeat

the Truce in 1915, but the governments put a stop to it by threatening to court-martial or even execute those who were caught “fraternizing” with the enemy. From a purely military standpoint, it did make sense, but from a Christian standpoint, it was cruel.

I would like to believe that those men who lived through the War were able to look back at that memorable Christmas Day as a light, a light that shined through the darkness of war. On that day, at least, there was peace on the earth; given to them because they were men of good-will.



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ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

An Autobiography

CHAPTER FOUR FIRST COMMUNION

Soon after my First Communion, I went into retreat again to prepare for Confirmation. It was with the greatest care that I made ready for the coming of the Holy Ghost, and I could not understand how anyone could do otherwise before receiving this Sacrament of Love.¹

For some reason, the ceremony was delayed, so I had the consolation of having my retreat prolonged. How happy I felt! Like the Apostles, I looked with joy for the promised Comforter, gladdened by the thought that I should soon be a perfect Christian, and have the holy Cross, the symbol of that wondrous Sacrament, traced upon my forehead for all eternity.

¹ Speaking to Celine, during this retreat, of the manner in which the Holy Ghost takes possession of the soul, her words were so inflamed, and her look became suddenly so ardent, that her sister, unable to endure it, lowered her eyes and withdrew, filled with a sense of the supernatural she never forgot (*Spirit of St. Thérèse*). (Reverend Thomas N. Taylor, Editor)

I did not feel the mighty wind of the first Pentecost, but rather the gentle breeze which the prophet Elias heard on Mount Horeb. On that day I received the gift of fortitude in suffering—a gift I needed sorely, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin.

When these sweet and memorable feasts were over, I had to resume my life as a day pupil at the Abbey. I made good progress with my lessons and remembered quite easily the sense of what I read; but I found the greatest difficulty in learning by heart, and indeed it was only at catechism my efforts were ever crowned with success. The chaplain called me his little “Doctor of Theology,”² no doubt because of my name Thérèse.

During recreation I frequently gave myself up to serious thoughts, while from a distance I watched my companions at

² St. Teresa of Avila is called the Doctor of Mystical Theology, because of her writings on the relations of the soul with God. (Reverend Thomas N. Taylor, Editor)

play: in fact, this was my favorite occupation. Another one, which gave me real pleasure, was to pick up the little dead birds that had fallen from the trees, and bury them in a special plot apart. At times, too, I told stories to my companions, and even the big girls came to listen, but my career as an orator was, wisely, soon brought to an end by the interference of our mistress, who wished us just then to exercise our bodies rather than our brains.

About this time, I chose as friends two little girls of my own age. But how shallow are the hearts of creatures! It happened that for some reason one of them had to remain at home for several months. While she was away, I thought of her very often, and on her return showed great pleasure at seeing her again. All I met with, however, was a glance of indifference — my friendship was not appreciated. I felt this very keenly, and I no longer sought an affection which had proved so inconstant. Nevertheless, I still love my little school friend and I pray for her; God has given me a faithful heart, and when once I love, I love forever.

Observing that some of the girls were very devoted to one or other of the mistresses, I tried to imitate them, but never succeeded in winning special

favor. Happy failure, from how many evils have you not saved me! I am most thankful to Our Lord that He has allowed me to find only bitterness in earthly friendships. With a heart such as mine I should so easily have been taken captive and had my wings clipped. How then should I have been able to “*fly away and be at rest?*”¹ How can a heart given up to human affection be closely united to God? It appears to me impossible. I have seen so many souls who, having been allured like poor moths by this treacherous light, fly into the flame and burn their wings, then return injured to Our Lord, the Divine Fire which burns and does not consume.

I know well that Jesus saw I was too weak to be exposed to temptation, for without doubt had my eyes been dazzled by the deceitful light of creatures, I should have been utterly lost. There, where strong souls find joy, and are faithful in practicing detachment, I found only bitterness. No merit, then, is due to me for not having let myself be bound by false ties, since by God's sweet mercy alone was, I preserved from them. Too well do I realize that without Him I might have fallen as low as St. Mary Magdalen, and the great words of the Divine Master to Simon the

¹ *PS. liv. 7.*

Pharisee re-echo with much sweetness in my soul. I know that “*to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less,*”¹ but I know, too, that Our Lord has forgiven me even more than He forgave St. Mary Magdalen. I wish it were possible to say all that I feel, but here is an example which will convey to you some idea of what I mean.

Let us suppose that the son of a very clever doctor, stumbling over a stone on the road, falls and breaks his leg. His father hastens to his aid and binds up the fractured limb with all the skill at his command. When cured, the son shows the utmost gratitude — and with good reason.

But, on the other hand, suppose that the father, knowing that a large stone lies on his son's path, anticipates the danger, and unseen by anyone, hastens to remove it. Unconscious of the accident from which such tender forethought has saved him, the son will not show any mark of gratitude for it, or feel the same love for his father as he would have done had he been cured of some grievous wound. But if he came to learn the whole truth, would he not love his father all the more?

Well now, I am this child, the object of the foreseeing love of a Father “*Who did not send His*

Son to call the just, but sinners.”² He wishes me to love Him because He has forgiven me, not much, but everything. Without waiting for me to love Him much, as St. Mary Magdalen did, He has made me understand how He has loved me with an ineffable love and forethought, in order that my own love may reach even unto folly. I have often heard it said, both in retreats and elsewhere, that an innocent soul has never loved more than a repentant one. Ah, if I could but give the lie to those words!

But I have wandered so far from my subject that I scarcely know where to begin again. ... It was during the retreat before my second Communion that I fell a prey to scruples, and I remained in this unhappy state for nearly two years. It is not possible for me to describe all the sufferings it entailed; one must have passed through such a martyrdom to be able to understand it. Every thought, every action, even the simplest, was a source of trouble and anguish; no peace came to me till I told everything to Marie, and that cost me a great deal, for I imagined myself obliged to lay open absolutely all my thoughts, even the most extravagant. This done, I experienced a momentary peace, but it passed like a flash and once again the

¹Luke vii. 47.

²Luke v. 32.

martyrdom began. Dear Marie, with how many occasions for patience did I not furnish you?

That year we spent a fortnight of our holidays at the seaside. My aunt, ever ready to give proof of her motherly love, treated us to all manner of amusements — donkey rides, shrimping, and so on. She indulged us also in the matter of clothes: once, I remember, she gave me some pale blue ribbon and, in spite of my twelve and a half years, I was such a child that I quite enjoyed tying it on my hair. But even this childish pleasure filled me with scruples, and I could not rest till I had been to confession.

During our stay at Trouville, I had a salutary lesson. Cousin Marie frequently had sick headaches, and on these occasions my aunt used to fondle her and call her the most endearing names. The only response, however, was continual tears and the ceaseless complaint: “My head aches!” Though I had a headache nearly every day, I made no complaint. But one evening, I was seized with a desire to imitate Marie and throwing myself into an armchair in a corner of the room, I began to cry. Cousin Jeanne, to whom I was very devoted, was soon at my side, and my aunt, too, was all anxiety to know what was the matter. Like Marie, I only answered: “My head aches!”

Apparently, complaining was a part which did not suit me, for I failed to convince anyone that a headache was the real cause of my tears. Therefore, instead of pitying me as she usually did, aunt spoke to me very seriously. Jeanne went so far as to reproach me, kindly, it is true, but evidently grieved at my lack of simplicity, and want of confidence in my aunt, for she was convinced that my tears were caused by some scruple which I was unwilling to make known. Getting nothing for my pains, I made up my mind never again to imitate other people, and I now understood the fable of the ass and the little dog. I was the ass who, seeing all the petting bestowed on the dog, put his clumsy hoof on the table to try and secure his share. If, unlike the poor animal, I escaped a sound beating, I received at any rate what I deserved — a severe lesson which cured me once and for all of the desire to attract attention.



To Be Continued

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 THREE

The Practice of Abandonment

CHAPTER ONE

The Life of Love



Article 3 Faithful Servants

In the gift of oneself, there are degrees. In like manner, there are degrees in the gift of Jesus. Among the innumerable souls that are devoted to Him, Jesus counts faithful servants, secret friends, hidden sons.

These are three stages; they correspond to the degrees of the ascension of the soul toward God. They form what may be called a ladder of intimacy by which all souls may mount. Jesus invites them. From the first efforts of the soul that strives to belong to God, He gives Himself as a good master gives himself to the faithful servants of the house.

The notion of a servant altogether devoted to his master

is in danger of being lost. It is now preserved only in some Christian families of the old school.

With punctuality and affectionate care, the faithful servant executes the orders he has received. He loves his master and is proud of being in his service. Wages are not his chief object; he knows that nothing will be lacking to him. He regards himself as a member of the family. The children of the house treat him with fondness mingled with respect.

The faithful servant is a treasure. The master gives him an account of the business, confiding to him his dearest interests. The master knows that his goods are safe in the servant's hands, that his honor and his glory will find a jealous defender. If necessary, the

servant can forget himself, suffer, and even die to save and to avenge his master.

Moreover, the master honors the servant with unlimited confidence, showers him with delicate attentions, and takes care to provide generously for all his needs. The more vigilant the servant in his master's interest, the more does the master regard him as dear and, as it were, sacred.

This is the case with every man who, renouncing himself, is vowed to the interests of Jesus Christ. This Divine Master takes him into His employ, makes him a domestic servitor, confides to him the interests of His glory, the defense of His Church, the propagation of the Gospel. He charges him to combat error, spread truth, stigmatize vice and encourage virtue.

These men are the outposts of the army of Christ. One knows them by their indefatigable zeal, their upright bearing, their noble disinterestedness, their impeccable fidelity. As one of them has said, they serve God boldly. With them there is no compromise, no truce. The enemies know it. They fear these valiant soldiers of Christ.

Such are the apostolic workers who stand in the breach ready to defend the honor of Jesus Christ and to extend His reign.

Such are the souls consecrated to God who spend their lives relieving the unfortunate, caring for the sick, diffusing Christian knowledge. Such are the countless men and women in the world whose time is devoted to good works, whose strength is expended in the service of the neighbor, whose wealth passes into the hands of the poor, whose talents serve for the defense of truth.

Jesus knows them all by name. He is divinely proud of their services. And moreover, He treats them as strong souls; He reserves their recompense and incites them to unceasing labors.

But they, on their part, know that they are beloved servants and that the Master has confidence in them. For His sake they will go through fire and water. For Him they would spend the last drops of their sweat and their blood.

Jesus still counts many faithful servants. They are the outer rampart that protects the City of God.

Article 4 *Secret Friends*

To the faithful servant, God gives His confidence; to the secret friend He gives His Heart. The soul which is once surrendered to God hastens to renew her gift. Occupations,

contradictions, sufferings, the least incidents of daily life are, for her, occasions of repeating her act of abandonment to God. Her heart is like inflammable material; the least spark suffices to set it on fire.

Arrived at this degree of love, the soul is treated by Jesus as a friend. It is delightful to be the friend of Jesus. The significance of the distinction is perceived, not by the intellect, but by the heart.

The friend gives his love, and in this love, he surrenders his entire self. The master, on the contrary, merely gives his confidence. He entrusts his interests to the servitor; he does not admit him to his secrets; he does not call him near, to converse intimately. This privilege is reserved for the friend. Jesus said: "I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you." (*St. John 15:15.*)

Strange disregard of His Divine dignity! Jesus treats the soul as an equal. Is not this proper to true friendship? Friends are equals or must become so. Jesus abases His dignity to my nothingness. He lifts my lowliness to His Divinity. With the servant, the master keeps his position of superiority, of command. Between Jesus and the soul, His friend, it seems

that there is no longer any distance; there is outpouring of affection, mutual communication of joys and sorrows, intimate confidence and self-abandonment.

While the servant, by order of the Master, is employed in exterior occupations, the soul that is retired with her Friend gives herself to interior exercises. While Martha is busy in the service of Jesus and His disciples, Mary is sitting tranquilly at the Master's Feet. Jesus inspires a moderate activity in the elder sister, and He is pleased with her services; but His Eyes rest lovingly upon the younger sister. The first is the more active, the second more loving. The one makes herself an eager servant; the other aspires to be a friend of Jesus. When the Master has finished speaking, Magdalen also will resume her work; she will not show less zeal than her elder sister; but her action will have more value in the Eyes of Jesus, because she has greater love.

Oh, happy state of the soul which is a friend of Jesus! Of her, Jesus requires that which is most sweet, love. It is fidelity, obedience, above all, that He exacts from the servant; from the friend, He exacts the heart.

The heart once given; the soul belongs to Jesus. She endeavors to satisfy His least desires. The

servant retains his liberty; the friend sacrifices his freedom to the good pleasure, the glory, the honor of the one he loves.

Touching union of two hearts entirely blended into one, absorbed in an absolutely pure love, reposing in mutual and trustful abandonment, without selfishness, without care, without apprehension!

Beloved soul, approach Jesus. He is immeasurably good. He loves thee and calls thee His friend. It is true that thou art a sinner; but Jesus does not resist love. Many sins will be forgiven thee if thou lovest much.

Jesus forgets faults. Unlike men, He keeps no bitterness in the depth of His Heart. O Jesus, I believe this; I believe it firmly; I would not do Thee the injustice of doubting it for an instant. Have I not experienced Thine excessive bounty a thousand times? Have I not read and re-read, weeping, the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, the conversion of Magdalen and Thy touching tenderness toward her? O Jesus, how good Thou art!

Thy Heart was moved at the sight of the poor widow of Naim, who wept as she followed the body of her only son, and Thou didst recall her child to life. Thy compassion

was aroused at seeing the improvidence of the crowd which had hastened to the desert to hear Thee, and Thou didst feed them by a miracle. Thy Divine Eyes filled with tears at the spectacle of the evils that were to be heaped upon ungrateful Jerusalem. Thou didst fear to grieve Thy compassionate Mother, and didst anticipate the time of Thy miracles in order to please her. Thy Soul was touched and distressed at beholding the sorrow of Martha and Mary, and Thou didst weep, O Jesus! And Thou didst call to life their brother. Thou hadst pity on the multitude wandering like sheep without a shepherd, and didst multiply Thine apostolic journeys throughout Palestine, sowing miracles, going about doing good.

And what could I say if I wished to enumerate Thy manifestations of tenderness for me in particular? But that must be a secret, must it not, Jesus? When Thou dost attract the heart, Thou leadest it into solitude. There, far from every indiscreet listener, Thou revealest Thy secrets; far from every profane eye, Thou bestowest Thy caresses.

Jesus, I follow Thee into the solitude of my heart. I listen to that Voice that calls me. I know it so well! Alas, it has often called me in vain! The sound

has often been stifled in the tumult of my fanciful desires, vain fears, frivolous pre-occupations. O Jesus, Thou wert standing at the door, knocking and waiting! Thy Heart, a thirst for love, sought my soul; and I fled and hid myself.

But now, Jesus, I belong to Thee. I have given myself to Thee, and Thou hast gladly received me. Thou hast opened Thy Heart to me; there Thou

hast shown me my place, so long unoccupied! Jesus, let us love each other now, and let us forget the past.

Yes, I wish to make Thee forget that long, sad waiting, by the strength of my love. Our friendship shall know no decline. Guard me well, O Jesus! I place my trust in Thee. In return, I will love Thee, and will console Thee for Thy Divine Heart's numberless disappointments.



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FRANCISCAN SAINTS

DECEMBER 14TH

Blessed Conrad of Offida

Confessor, First Order

Born at Offida, a little town in the diocese of Ascoli, in 1241, Conrad grew up under the watchful care of his devout parents in innocence and a seriousness unusual in a child of his age. He entered the Franciscan Order as a youth of fourteen. There he devoted himself to prayer, meditation, and the faithful observance of the Rule, as well as to thorough study of the sacred sciences. He was destined for the priesthood, nevertheless it pleased his humility to do some of the most disagreeable and wearying duties performed by the lay brothers.

In Blessed Peter of Treja, he found a companion of similar disposition, animated with burning zeal, love of God, and an unwearied desire for sanctity. The two formed a holy friendship and joined in constant imitation of their Saviour and of our holy Father St. Francis. In this way, Conrad made such progress in perfection that some of the first disciples of St. Francis who

were still alive at that time, used to call him the “second St. Francis.”

Like the holy Founder, he was often favored with apparitions of Our Lady and of the saints. Once on the feast of the Purification, when he was meditating on the significance of the feast, Our Lady deigned, in the presence of his friend Peter of Treja, to place the Divine Child in his arms. He was given the grace to touch and convert the hearts of sinners by his sermons.

But the farther his reputation spread, the more did he seek the seclusion of solitary convents, endeavoring as much as possible, to keep aloof from the world. Sometimes he went to Mt. La Verna, at other times to Pirolo. But he felt most at home in the convent in Forano, where he again met Peter of Treja and, together with him, led a truly celestial life. It was here that God granted him the gift of miracles and of prophecy.

After nearly half a century of such a life, he died on December 12, 1366, during the course of a mission he was giving at Bastia near Assisi. In the year 1626 his body was transferred from Bastia to the church of the Friars Minor in Perugia, where it still reposes and is much venerated by the people. In view of the many miracles wrought at his intercession in the centuries following his death, Pope Pius VII, on April 21, 1817, confirmed the veneration paid to him.

Mary and Her Divine Child

1.) Consider that God has often permitted His saints to take the Divine Child in their arms from the hands of Mary, His Mother. That happened also in the life of Blessed Conrad. God permitted it as a token of his tender love for the saints. At the same time it shows through whom we should expect to receive Christ. Just as Mary was chosen by the Most Holy Trinity to bring the Redeemer to mankind in general, so is each individual to receive Jesus through her. For that reason, St. Bernard admonishes us: "Seek for grace, but seek it through Mary!" — If you wish to receive the Divine Child into your heart on the feast of Christmas, then diligently

venerate Mary, the Mother of Divine Grace, during Advent.

2.) Consider that in tendering the Divine Child to the saints, Mary gave us to understand that her most ardent wish is to fill our hearts with love for her Divine Son. If you wish to please Our Lady, strive to increase the love of your heart for God. Do not let your devotion consist in mere pious sentiments, but aim for her sake to make yourself and others, as far as you can, daily more pleasing to her Divine Son. When you look at her picture with the Divine Child in her arms, beg her for her blessing in the words: "*Nos cum prole pia, benedicat Virgo Maria*" — May the Virgin Mary mild bless us with her Holy Child.

3.) Consider by what particular virtues Blessed Conrad merited to be so highly favored by Christ and His Mother. The virtues were his profound humility, for he thought nothing of himself and wished to remain hidden from the world; his tender piety, for it kept his heart constantly directed towards God, no matter where he was or what he was doing; and his holy zeal to fulfill the duties of his state of life. Examine yourself and see how far you resemble him in these virtues.



PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*Increase in our hearts, O Lord, sentiments of true piety, and grant us through the intercession of Thy blessed confessor Conrad, the grace to imitate the brilliant example of his remarkable humility and devotion. Through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.*



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THE GREATEST TREASURE

Reverend L. Chiavarino



CHAPTER XXI

THE MASS WHICH BRINGS MOST BENEFIT IS THAT AT WHICH ONE RECEIVES HOLY COMMUNION

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the greatest treasure on earth; it is the golden key of Paradise. But, Holy Communion is a heavenly treasure, the sure pledge of Paradise, something which gives to Holy Mass an even greater value. When we assist at Mass, we are taking part in the renewal of the Passion and Death of Christ; when we approach the Holy Table, we receive Jesus Himself in our hearts and become living tabernacles of Christ.

In the Mass we share in the fruits of the Passion of Our Lord; in Holy Communion there is entrusted to our keeping the very plant, the Tree of Life, which is Jesus Himself.

In the Mass, we accompany Jesus to Calvary and witness

His death; in Holy Communion He nourishes us with His Divine Flesh.

The Mass is the Promise, the Holy Eucharist, the Pledge, of Paradise. Jesus, infinite in power and in wisdom, could not have given us a greater gift than Holy Communion.

Let us, therefore, resolve to receive Holy Communion as often as we assist at Mass.

Agrippa, who was held a prisoner by the Emperor Tiberius, was set free by his successor, who added a touch of kindness to the act of liberation. The new Emperor gave Agrippa a chain of gold equal in weight to the chain of iron wherewith he had been bound, indicating that he

intended to load Agrippa with as great benefits as Tiberius had caused him anguish.

This is exactly what Our Lord Jesus Christ does for us if we unite reception of Holy Communion to our assistance at Mass. The Mass represents to us His Passion which frees us from the iron chains of sin that bind us to the devil. In Holy Communion we are united to Christ Himself by the golden chains of love.

We ought not to offer the excuse that it is impossible for us to receive Holy Communion often. I know of institutions where the young boarders go to Mass and Holy Communion daily. I know of colleges where all the students attend Mass every day, and where almost everyone receives Holy Communion. I know of shrines where countless numbers of people receive Our Lord every Sunday. There are places—in small towns and in great cities—where every morning sees men, women, and children at Mass and receiving Holy Communion.

If it is possible for so many to receive Holy Communion so frequently, can you not do as much, dear reader?

It cannot be said that such devotion is for common and ignorant people only. Go to any great city and there you may

see, on almost any morning you choose, many important and distinguished people, high in the world's esteem, — university professors, judges, army officers, statesmen, — going to Mass and receiving Holy Communion with great piety and devotion.

A nobleman who had been to Mass in the church of St. Mark in Florence ran into one of his friends on leaving the church. This man was employed in a Government office.

“You don't mean to tell me you've been to Mass?”

“Exactly!” said the nobleman.

“Come, come,” remarked the civil-servant, “why don't you abandon these superstitions which are kept alive by the ignorant and the stupid?”

“My dear friend,” said the noble, “look at the three men who are coming down the steps of the church; do you recognize them? One is Alessandro Manzoni, the other Gino Capponi, and the last Nicolo Tommaseo. They heard the same Mass I did; you see, I was in good company.”

He was indeed in good company: Gino Capponi was a celebrated writer; Alessandro Manzoni, the world-renowned novelist; while Nicolo Tommaseo was Minister of Public Instruction. Almost

every day these three great men received Holy Communion.

Any who are afflicted with prejudices in this regard ought to abandon them at once: let us resolve to attend Mass and to receive Holy Communion frequently. We shall always be in good company.

By hearing Mass and receiving Holy Communion we will gain for our souls many graces and blessings.

General de Sonis, regarded as one of the bravest and greatest of French military men, was asked how it happened that he was so excellent a strategist.

“I can answer you in a word,” he replied. “Every morning when I am free I go to seek instruction from the most valiant general who ever lived.”

“And who is he?”

“Jesus,” replied De Sonis. “I attend Mass and receive Holy Communion whenever I can. That is the secret of my victories.”

Mass and Holy Communion also teach us how to die well.

During the terrors of the French Revolution, which was still raging in 1793, Catholics in France suffered much. In a humble convent near Paris some nuns were keeping a prayerful vigil. Their sacred hymns lent an air of added piety

and devotion to the holy place. It was at the hour of Mass and the time of Communion was drawing near. After they had received Jesus into their hearts, the sisters intoned the Magnificat which echoed far and wide. A furious mob of revolutionaries, thirsting for blood, interrupted the angelic voices and burst into the sanctuary shouting, “Down with the idols!” They turned on the nuns and ordered them to sing the song of the Revolution. “You will either sing the Marseillaise or go to the guillotine. We’ve had enough of the Magnificat.”

But the fearless sisters continued to sing until they were forced to leave the sacred place. Even then the small band of virgins went on their way to death in holy exultation. Soon the blood of those holy women was trickling down from the platform on which the guillotine was set. Nevertheless, the song continued, although with ever increasing feebleness... three voices... then two voices... finally with the voice of the youngest novice the song died away. The earthly Magnificat of these martyr virgins was indeed over; but in Heaven the *Te Deum* had been intoned.

How beautiful a thing it is to die for Jesus and bearing Jesus in the heart!

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