

THE SERAPH

January 2021

Vol. XLI No. 5



PUBLISHED WITH EPISCOPAL AUTHORIZATION

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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

The **SERAPH** is published monthly, except in July and August, by the Franciscans in Rochester, NY.

The **SERAPH** defends the authentic doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church and the moral values upon which Godly nations were founded.

The **SERAPH** stands opposed to any and all heterodoxy, particularly as manifested in today's heresy of Modernism. It holds to the principle that good will without truth is a sham and that truth without good will is a shame.

The **SERAPH** seeks to serve and unite in spirit all Roman Catholics, faithful to tradition, and all men of good will, for the betterment of society according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

USA: Free upon request.

Suggested donation - \$20.00.

FOREIGN: Air Mail - \$40.00 per year.

ALL CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE SENT TO :

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

TELEPHONE: (585) 621-1122

EMAIL: father@friarsminor.org

WEBSITES: friarsminor.org &
franciscanfathers.com

EDITORIAL POLICY

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Publishers:

Order of St. Francis of Assisi, Inc.
Rochester, New York 14616 USA

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

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU

Bishop Giles, OFM DD

With the coming of every New Year, many of us form hopes and plans to improve our lives in some way. Many will begin a new diet or exercise routine. Some will seek further education or job opportunities. Some will be looking forward to beginning a new stage in life, retirement, or a new vocation in marriage, religious or clerical vows. With all that is new, the options and opportunities are many and varied.

With optimism and hope, we look forward to another chance to improve or advance. Strangely enough, our focus is almost exclusively upon material things. The cares of this world consume all our attention so that our plans and goals seldom go further than this life. We tend to live as if we will be on this earth forever, or at least for a long time.

The reality is that many have died this past year, and many will die this year. This may indeed be our last New Year in this world. We should expand our narrow-minded worldliness and make plans for eternity. Resolving to live healthier or better in this world is well

and good, but there is something much more important than this life and this body. The longest life with the healthiest body in this world is truly insignificant when compared with eternity in Heaven or in Hell.

God has given us time. He has given us this New Year. Every day is a special grace from Him. The fundamental question to ask ourselves is what does He want or expect from me? How does God want me to use this gift of time? When my time on this earth is over what account can I give to my Savior and God Jesus Christ?

The Catechism is clear that we are given this life and time in this world to know, love, and serve God. The health of our bodies pales in significance with the health of our souls. This New Year is an opportunity for us to restore or increase our spiritual lives. It is a time of examination. What is the current state of our souls? Where are we heading – spiritually or eternally? Where do we want to be spiritually or eternally? And how do we get there?

Now is the time of grace. We cannot go back in time. We get no “do-overs.” If our past has been less than ideal, now is the time to repent for our transgressions. If we have been going in the wrong direction, now is the opportunity for us to turn around and begin going in the right direction. We have wasted enough time and we have strayed way too far from the path. We should strive to redouble our efforts to make up for the graces lost. We must make the current graces we are receiving produce even more abundantly since the lost graces are no longer in our possession or able to produce any fruit or merit for us.

God wants us to give Him all our love – Love Him with our whole heart, mind, and soul, even more than we love ourselves. Our past sins and transgressions are our failures to love Him correctly. We cannot go back, (those opportunities are lost) but we can put to better use what we have been given today. We must love Him even more intently than we have ever done before because we have a lot to make up for.

The world and the devils encourage us to travel fast and furious in the way of sin. If we have followed this path, we often see the distance we have strayed and imagine that the

return path is too far or too hard. This is a temptation to give up and not even try. If we examine this, we quickly see just how foolish it is. We did not get that far from God in a moment. If we begin right now, God will give us the grace to cover the distance. He can bring us to perfection in an instant if we will only work with Him or allow ourselves to be moved by Him.

After St. Augustine’s conversion, his prayer was: “I have loved Thee late, my God. But I love Thee now. And I seek to love Thee more and more every day.” With the grace of God, we can exponentially amass greater and greater love. This love, or charity, covers a multitude of sins. What is wanting for us to do is what all the saints have done before us. The will, the resolution, the determination, the love. Now is the acceptable time to put off the old you and put on the new you – a new you living and loving God and ever-growing in that love and grace.

May we, one and all, strive to love God more than we have ever loved before. May we be renewed in our spiritual lives and truly make the most of this New Year allowing God to draw us into a greater life and love. May this New Year find a truly new you.

My Lesson

Only to rest where He puts me;
Only to do His will;
Only to be what He made me,
Though I be nothing still.

Never look beyond me,
Out of a little sphere —
If I could fill another,
God would not keep me here.

Only to take what He gives me,
Meek as a little child;
Questioning naught of the reason,
Joyful, or reconciled.

Only to do what He bids me,
Patiently, gladly today,
Taking no thought for the morrow,
Leaning on Him all the way.

Only to look to Him ever;
Only to sit at His feet;
All that He sayeth, to do it —
Then shall my life be complete.

~Author Unknown

STRIKE THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP WILL SCATTER

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD

We are witnessing today what has been foreseen when the shepherd is struck, and the sheep are scattered (*Zacharias 13:7-9*). When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, the guards came for Him and the Apostles were scattered. The Apostles were later all gathered again, and St. Peter was appointed to be their visible head after Jesus ascended into Heaven. Jesus can no longer be struck as He was in the Garden, but His visible head – a pope (or the papacy) can be.

Evil conspirers have worked for many years to take over the place of St. Peter. Their desire for the destruction of the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, could only be accomplished by taking over the Vatican. The devils cannot attack Jesus, but they can assault His Body – the Catholic Church. Direct physical assaults generally meet with resistance. A stronger arm may subdue and bring a weaker one into submission and those taken may not resist physically, but spiritually and mentally they rebel against their physical

conquerors. When Communism is imposed by force there is a lot of death and destruction, rebellion, and dissension. When Communism is taught and then accepted and voted in, then it is more readily and easily accepted. The downfall of political Communism seems only apparent. It was a simple rebranding and opening up. The opposition to political Communism was overcome through indoctrination and this brought the enemies of Communism into unity with it.

The devils have been studying us and practicing their tactics upon us since the creation of Adam. Fomenting wars and conflict always end in their defeat. The grace of God is much stronger than them. There is no doubt that the devils are experts in antagonizing us and turning us against each other, but they have developed a much better tool to accomplish their goals. Physical force is still used when it suits their purposes, but indoctrination and weakening of our wills are much more successful.

The kingdoms of this earth, established and maintained as images and models of the Kingdom of Heaven, have been a long-standing thorn in the eyes of demons. Turning the various kingdoms against each other did a lot of damage, but the thoughts of men seemed to always return to God and the Kingdom of Heaven. The devils have learned from this. Now, through long-standing indoctrination and weakening of our wills, society has come to reject, if not despise, these kingdoms made in the image of the Eternal Kingdom of Heaven. Our history books are full of negative remarks or innuendos against this form of government. A demonic solution is a godless form of government – a godless society. Atheistic Communism was the demonic solution – suggestion – temptation. Of course, it was initially resisted and fought against, so the training began in milder forms and developed over time: Republics, Democracies, Socialism, Communism. What is the next step, but anarchy and then, Atheism or Demonism? It is most successful today because several generations of been gradually conditioned to accept it.

The technique is simple Pavlovian animal behavior training. Socialist professors present demonic ideas and concepts and then reward and promote those who conform to these ideas. It truly takes a special grace from God to obtain a public education and not become sucked up in this demonic trap. Our colleges and universities have been turning out socialist/communist/atheist graduates for many years now. These are now the leaders and influencers of the world today.

There is no longer trust in God or trust in the government. There is only trust in ourselves. And we are easily deceived by ignorance and our blind passions. What would be most humorous, if it were not so tragically true, is that the ignorant believe they are informed and those blindly following the fallen nature of their perverted passions believe that they are their own masters and are in control.

What has been left out and then forgotten? God and the Church! Civil government has become separated and devoid of true religion. Societies are living without God. The pinnacle of society and governments – the Catholic Church – is now and has always been in the devils' sights.

If this were not frightening enough, we must now realize that this same gradualism of: materialism, naturalism, indifference, demonism was also eating away at the Church just as it was doing to societies and governments. For many years now, Freemasonry has infiltrated the Church. The "*Alta Vendita*" laid out the goal of taking over the Church and the means of reaching it. With great pain and sorrow in our hearts, we must admit that the devils have reached their goal. They have infiltrated the Church and taken over Her buildings and now pretend to be the True Church. They have entered seminaries and convents and have obtained places in the Hierarchy and promoted their own from within. This has culminated in the "election" of heretics: Humanists, Materialists, Naturalists, etc. to the highest offices in the Church – even to the very summit of the Papal office.

With the death of Pope Pius XII, we see ever-increasing boldness in the supposed election of popes. Small errors and heresies at first, then came bold and open rebellion against Divine Revelation and Catholic tradition, morals, and doctrine. What the demonic Freemasons have accom-

plished is the placing of one of their own upon the Chair of St. Peter. It is obvious to those who are still able to reason and are honest that these are wolves in sheep's clothing. A heretic is outside the Church and is cut off from the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Often these heresies are so obvious and consistent that we can safely assume that they are obstinate. We are not speaking of human weakness or frailty but deliberate and calculated evil. In little things at first, then ever greater evil and denial of Jesus Christ.

The election of a heretic to the papal office is invalid. A severed member (heretic) cannot be the visible head of the Body from which he has cut himself off. A heretic is not guided and protected by the Holy Ghost from teaching error or heresies. The errors and outright heresies that we see coming from the alleged Chair of St. Peter are nothing more than glimpses of the wolf that is hiding under the sheep's skin.

A wolf may be sitting on the physical chair of St. Peter and may present himself as the Vicar of Jesus Christ, but this does not make him Catholic or the true Pope. The papacy has been struck and the Church is scattered. The demonically

inspired wolves teach that it does not matter what religion you practice as long as you love everyone. They preach equality of religions – Demonism (Paganism, Judaism, heresies of every description) is just as good as equal to Catholicism. The flock is scattered and is continually being scattered.

The New Order Church headed by false popes is not the true Church. The true Church has been robbed of Her Visible Vicar. A physical body of any kind sitting on the physical Chair of St. Peter does not make it a pope. A dog, wolf, monkey, or even a book are all bodies, and they can all physically sit on the Chair of St. Peter, but that would not make any of these a true pope. Nor is it enough for the body to be human. The true Vicar of Jesus Christ must be Catholic and unite the Church in the true teachings and worship of Jesus Christ.

The devils cannot strike Jesus Christ, but they have struck His Vicar and have usurped the physical Holy See. They can never possess the true Apostolic See. These devils have placed men in the Vatican but these men in no way represent Jesus Christ here on earth, nor are they guided and protected by the

Holy Ghost. They are instead representatives of demonic ideas and are guided by evil spirits. The devils are often permitted to take possession of human bodies, but God does not allow them to take over the wills of these poor people. The possessed person often experiences this conflict of wills within themselves when the devils take physical possession of their bodies. The actions and words of those being possessed are not their own. It is a different spirit.

The devils have, through their agents, taken possession of the Vatican and the physical properties of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, and they speak and act in those positions as if they were who they pretend to be. Possession of a body or material object does not make one the true owner of that body or material object. The world may recognize possession as ownership or validity, but this is not so in the Spiritual realm. A wolf is a wolf and destroyer even if he is clothed in sheep's skin and sitting at the head of the flock. His job as a wolf is to destroy and scatter not to unite and lead to Jesus Christ.

With the acceptance of all religions in the Modernist Church and the ever nearer goal of a One World

(Demonic) Religion, we see the obvious scattering of the flock of Jesus Christ. There is an opposition to this in the so-called “Traditionalist Catholic” movement, but it, too, is divided and scattered. Some want to recognize the wolf sitting in the Chair of St. Peter as a true Pope. Some want to say, he is a “material pope” but not a “formal” one. (We can close one eye and choose to see only the sheep’s skin and pretend everything is good.) The divisions continue with considerations over the validity of the Sacraments. Some hold that the New Order Church “sacraments” are valid, others hold that they are invalid. There is the further consideration of whether the minister’s intentions are necessary for the valid administration of the sacraments – and then what is the minimum intention necessary – as well as did this particular person have the correct intention? Can, or did, a Freemasonic wolf in sheep’s clothing validly confer Holy Orders? Some appear to think there is essentially nothing wrong with Freemasonry while others clearly see the demonic hidden in this organization. Some want to obtain sacraments (including Holy Orders) from sects that are long in schism with the

Church. (These may be valid, but they are illicit or illegal because they are in opposition or rebellion to the unity and charity of the Church.)

Some want to deny that true bishops have any jurisdiction because there is no pope to give them jurisdiction. (It is a *de Fide* dogma that the bishops hold by Divine rite ordinary power of government over their diocese. *An immediate power, that is, it is not practiced at the order of a superior, but in the Bishop’s own name. Thus, bishops are not delegates (agents) and not vicars (representatives) of the Pope, but independent pastors of the flocks entrusted to them, even though they are subordinate to the Pope.*)

So, we see in the Modernists and the world religions as well as in the “Traditionalists” sects the attitude of “visit the church of your choice.” If you do not like one particular church there are others, or you can start one of your own. Catholics soon learned from the Protestants to go church shopping or priest shopping. If you do not like your parish priest, then go to a different priest in a different parish or even a different diocese. Catholics seem to have forgotten that they belong to a particular church because it is

so easy to travel to any other church around and find a priest that is more to one's liking. The "Traditionalists" do the same. The Shepherd has been struck down and the sheep are scattered.

The Church is not dead even though the Vatican is filled with heretics (enemy usurpers) and the Holy See is spiritually empty. These heretics and usurpers are not the Church. We must remember that the Church is Apostolic, there must always be at least one true successor to the Apostles. The Mystical Body of Jesus Christ lives on even if her worldly gifts are ruled over and are in the physical possession of the enemies of Jesus Christ. Somewhere there must always reside at least one faithful successor to the Apostles (a true bishop). With those remnant bishops, the Catholic Church continues in our world. We must not seek priests, bishops, or popes that we like, but ones that are true to Jesus Christ and the Church. Having found a true bishop we should be loyal and support him and the priest that he has appointed for us. We must stop the wandering around from priest to priest or church to church.

This wandering around in search of what suits our tastes at this particular moment is truly demonic anarchy. If a priest is a true and valid priest working with a true and valid successor to the Apostles (bishop), let us support him and be faithful to him even if we may have some personal dislike of him. This is the right order and this overcoming of our own tastes or our own wills in insignificant matters is pleasing to God, Who instructs us to daily deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. It is the devils that preach and practice the doctrine of divide and conquer. We are not Catholic because we like this priest or that one, or because the priest is perfect. We are Catholic because we believe all that Jesus Christ teaches us through the Catholic Church, we hope through the merits of Jesus Christ given through the Sacraments, to obtain the forgiveness of our sins and gain eternal life, and we love God with our whole being and our neighbors as we love ourselves. Though we must reject the false shepherds, we must always strive to unite and follow the true shepherds (Apostolic successors) that God has given us.

HOPE

Father Joseph Noonan, OFM

Hope is the virtue by which we firmly trust that God, Who is all-powerful and faithful to His promises, will, in His mercy, give us eternal happiness and the means to obtain it. (*My Catholic Faith*)

When one speaks of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, it seems at times that the virtue of hope is not considered to be as important as faith and charity. If one, though, were to remove hope from his life, it undoubtedly would be filled with darkness and despair.

Generally, life has an unending number of difficulties that must be dealt with. If one did not have some sense of hope in his life, it would be far too easy to give in or give up. One would probably constantly question whether or not the time and effort are worth the pain and suffering it may cost him.

Our Catholic heritage (the Sacraments, Catholic education, grace, etc.) provides one with the means to supernaturalize each day and its crosses. The Catholic who begins each day with a morning offering is reminded

how to conduct himself, making the day a continual prayer which may be offered up in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In this way one puts into practice the supernatural virtue of hope, realizing the means given to him and the effect upon the soul in cooperating with these graces.

When a Catholic understands the faith well and is serious about his salvation, he becomes a beacon of light and hope. The Divine Light of Christ pierces the darkness of sin and evil and provides the needed guidance to overcome these moments of difficulty and temptation.

It is an unfortunate fact that so many do not know Christ or His Church, and are too often left lingering in a lifeless void. They do not understand how to resolve moral questions or to properly avoid occasions of sin. Too often, these persons live in mortal sin with little hope of eternal salvation.

The year 2020 was a year like no other in memory. It presented the individual and the world with continuing situations that most had never seen.

The unreasonable panic and fear created by “experts” and hyped by the media very quickly produced a situation where many people were living in fear of their lives. A fear which caused many to lose hope. The number of suicides in 2020 greatly increased.

It is believed by this writer that it was the intention of certain people to create this fear to more easily control others. Thankfully, as the year went by, more and more citizens no longer panicked or lived in fear. The amount of damage done to the minds of men may never be known. Restoring hope to the nation and the world will, perhaps, be the biggest and most important task. Only God knows if and when this can be accomplished.

Restoration of hope will only occur in as much as one turns to God in prayer, humble prayer which acknowledges the need for God’s grace in all things and ignoring the empty noise of the media.

Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. It is to Him that one must go for the grace to overcome all obstacles and persevere with supernatural hope in the King of Kings and the Prince of Peace.

Many want you to believe that the state (government) has the

answers to your problems. This error is as old as the history of governments. It cannot give what it does not have. It is not its responsibility to provide for all of the needs of its citizens. For one to think that governments or organizations are the hope of one’s life, is a misguided thought.

The division which currently exists in the United States is only partly political. It is mainly a spiritual problem. The people of this nation are divided more than ever concerning religion and spiritual truths. This is the effect of turning away from the One True God and the religion Our Lord gave us two-thousand years ago. No reasonable person is going to believe that the thousands of false religions and the One True Church are the same and all may equally provide real hope to men. This, though, is an absurdity which too many today believe.

If one returns to the definition of hope given above, one sees that it begins with trust in God. How many have true trust in Almighty God, or is it a trust which exists only when life is going well? One might think of these as fair-weather Christians. What happens when the storms of life are raging? Do you run from Our

Lord or rightly toward Him
Who is the source of all Hope.

The definition concludes by telling us that eternal happiness is possible if one makes use of the means given to us. How many know what these means are, and who makes full use of them? This can only be accomplished in the Roman Catholic Church. Our Lord has provided us with the Mass and Sacraments which are the principal sources of supernatural grace, and in turn, will be the means through which one is filled with hope.

One's own fallen nature often gets in the way of grace. If more Catholics understood how they are their own worst enemy in this regard, perhaps they would take greater care of the unending number of situations which constantly chip away at the soul. As a result, hope is decreased and the daily struggle is unnecessarily worsened.

There is certain discipline involved in avoiding everyday occasions of sins and a greater one is required to keep all of the "noise" of the world at a distance so as not to undermine one's peace of soul and thereby effect hope in a person.

It has been noticed in 2020 that many are more fragile than they may have thought. The

mental state of many has been greatly affected, beyond, perhaps what may have been known by the person himself. Depression has increased to a frightening degree and suicides in some places outnumber those who have died from the Chinese virus.

The events of 2020 have been an excellent example of the various means by which people either have been tempted to lose hope or have given up entirely. Satan does not care why a person despairs, just as long as he does.

Catholics must understand that there are evil people in the world who are using the world as an experimental psyche operation. Lives do not matter. They are looking for a specific end in mind where souls are of little concern. This has become quite evident in the United States.

One must focus on his spiritual life with a particular emphasis on the supernatural virtue of hope, knowing that if one makes use of the means given to us by the Church, one has a much greater opportunity to go to Heaven. This is the very reason for hope and one has Our Savior as the model of hope, for He is the Hope of all men.

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

Father Anthony Lentz, OFM

“Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel: that by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man stands here before you whole. For there is no other Name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4, 10-12)

This short Scripture passage is taken from the Epistle for the *Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus*. St. Peter and the other Apostles had just received the Holy Ghost and were now bravely preaching the Gospel. St. Peter, as the first pope, preached this sermon before they Baptized five-thousand converts. Read this passage again and let it affect you! The confession of faith St. Peter displays is inspiring. The truth it contains is enlightening. Its reality is nothing more than humbling. He reveals to us that the saving power of Jesus’ Name is a condition, or rather, a necessity for salvation!

A person’s name, just like his picture, represents that person; so, any kind of insult done to the picture or the name is in

fact an insult to the person it represents. This is why it is important to avoid familiarity when using Our Lord’s Name – for too much familiarity breeds a lot of contempt. His Name must be given the most solemn reverence, for anything less would be an insult to our Lord, Himself. This insult, or more correctly, irreverence is often displayed when there is no intention to offend. An example of this is displayed in the phrase commonly heard today, *“What would Jesus do?”*

This phrase is fine in itself and it could become a source of meditation. It could become a supernatural aid in helping the soul advance in the spiritual life. This can only come about if it is taken in the proper and correct sense. Unfortunately, though, it has been so twisted by worldly-minded people that it has lost any spiritual meaning. Sadly, it is often used as a means of quieting anyone who objects to another’s sinful life. *“You should not judge others,”* they will say, *“think – what would Jesus do?”* It is true that we must not rashly judge another person, but there is a vast

contrast between rashly judging, and forming a judgment. Say for instance, that you know someone who lives a licentious and immoral life; it is either public knowledge or you know about it first-hand. You simply compare their lifestyle with the Sixth and Ninth Commandments of God then you can make a judgment. You are not judging the sinner, but the sin; you are then duty-bound by the laws of charity to do whatever you can to help this person repent, either by admonitions, or prayers, or both. By doing this you are simply doing what Jesus would do. Our Lord Jesus Christ loves all men; this is not a mere human affection, but the love of the God-Man who desires the salvation of all.

Again, I stress, that the world has perverted this thought so much that it has even become a joke. Once while I was waiting in the check-out line of a natural foods store, I looked over to their coffee section and they had a little sign that read, "What would Jesus brew?" This would have been almost comical if it was not, at the very least, borderline blasphemy. Perhaps Our Lord had a favorite drink, but to make His Name a slogan to sell coffee is certainly not respecting and honoring the

Name of Jesus Christ. As Catholics, we must keep in mind not to become prey to these types of novelties. We must seek to rise above these things and give reverence to this Holy Name! We honor and reverence It by daily meditating upon the life and teachings of Our Lord. Combining this with studying the truth is the only way to know what Our Lord would do in any given situation. It is to examine what He did, and in turn, examine what we do.

When we hear a person use the Lord's Name in vain and insulting Him in a number of ways, how do we respond? Are we silent? Is this silence because we value human respect more than honoring God? What would Jesus do? When Our Lord entered the temple and saw the money changers selling their merchandise, did He walk away and leave them alone? Certainly not! He fashioned Himself a whip and chased them out, "*My house is a house of prayer. But you have made it into a den of thieves!*" (St. Luke 19, 45) He stood up for the honor of His Father's house. Should we then not do the same?

Ask yourself these questions. When someone talks or treats you in a way that you do not

like, how do you respond? Is it in anger? Do you have thoughts of revenge? Do you fight back seeking your “eye for an eye” and your “tooth for a tooth”? If you find that you are guilty of this then ask the question: “*What would Jesus do?*” Meditate upon His Dolorous Passion and you will receive more than a sufficient answer. “Behold the Man!” During His Passion what did Our Lord endure? He was mocked, spit upon, beaten, scourged, and crucified. How did He respond during these torments? He responded with silence. He patiently suffered all because it pleased His Heavenly Father. Afterward, while on the Cross, He even prayed for His executioners – “*Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do!*” (St. Luke 23, 34) This is what Jesus did, do you do likewise?

As Catholics, we must remember that we are all called to the school of Christ. He is indeed the straight and narrow path which leads to salvation. His words and deeds are the bricks that pave this path. Every step that is taken must be taken in imitation of Christ. If we learn to love the Lord thy God with our whole heart, mind, and soul, and our neighbors as ourselves, then we will have followed the whole law. We will be following Christ’s example, by simply doing what He would do!

“For which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given him a Name which is above all names: That in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.” (St. Paul’s Letter to the Philippians 2:10)



“Pray with great confidence, with confidence based upon the goodness and infinite generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray.”

-St. Louis de Montfort

Prayer in Honor of the Most Holy and Adorable Name of Jesus

Jesus! O Name of Jesus! Sweet Name! Delightful Name! Consoling Name! For what else is Jesus than Savior. Therefore, O Jesus, for Thy sweet Name's sake, be to me a Jesus, and save me. Suffer me not to be eternally lost. O good Jesus! Let not my iniquities destroy me, whom Thy bounty made. O Sweet Jesus! Recognize in me what is Thine and efface all that is not Thine. O Sweet Jesus! Show mercy now in the time of mercy and condemn me not in the day of justice. What profit to Thy Precious Blood, or what honor will me destruction give Thy Holy Name, O Jesus! "The dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord Jesus! Nor all they that go down to hell." Most amiable Jesus! Most meek, most loving Jesus! O Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Admit me to the number of Thy elect.

*O Jesus, salvation of those who believe in Thee!
Comfort of those who fly to Thee! O Jesus, Son of the
Virgin Mary! Give me grace, wisdom, charity,
purity, and humility, that I may love Thee perfectly,
praise Thee, enjoy Thee, serve Thee, and be glorified
in Thee, with all those who call upon Thy Name, Thy
Holy Name, Thy sweet Name – Jesus.*

Amen.

~Author Unknown





THE SUNDAY SERMON

THE SUNDAY SERMON is a biweekly paper that offers a few spiritual thoughts for each Sunday throughout the year.

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ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

An Autobiography

CHAPTER FOUR

FIRST COMMUNION

I must now return to the subject of my scruples. They made me so ill that I had to be taken from school when I was thirteen. To complete my education, Papa took me several times a week to a very competent teacher, whose lessons served the purpose not only of instructing me, but also of bringing me into contact with the outside world.

Visitors were often shown into the quaintly furnished room where I sat surrounded with my books, and though conversation was carried on, as far as possible, by my governess's mother, I did not succeed in learning much while the visit lasted. Though seemingly absorbed in my work, little escaped my attention, even of what it would have been far better I should not hear. One visitor remarked on my beautiful hair; another enquired, as she left the room, who was the pretty little girl? Such remarks, all the more flattering because I was not meant to hear them, left a certain feeling of pleasure which clearly proved that I was full of self-love.

How great is my compassion for souls that perish! It is so easy to go astray along the world's seductive paths. Without doubt

the sweetness which it offers to one somewhat advanced in virtue is always mingled with bitterness, nor can the immense void of such a soul's desires be filled by the flattery of a moment; but in my case, had not my heart been lifted up to God from its first awakening, had the world smiled on me from the cradle, there is no knowing what I might have become. How gratefully then, dearest Mother, do I sing "*the Mercies of the Lord*"! Has He not, according to the words of Holy Wisdom, "*taken me away from the world lest wickedness should alter my understanding, or deceit beguile my soul*"?¹

Meanwhile, I resolved to consecrate myself in a special way to Our Blessed Lady, and therefore I sought admission into the Sodality of the Children of Mary.² For this it was necessary to go twice a week to the convent, but I was so shy that I must admit it cost me an effort. I certainly had a great love for my mistresses, and I shall always

¹Cf. Wisdom iv. n.

²She became a Sodalist of Our Lady, May 31, 1886. (*Reverend Thomas N. Taylor, Editor*)

retain a strong feeling of gratitude towards them, but, as I have already said, unlike other old pupils, I had no special friend among them with whom I might have spent several hours. So, I worked on in silence till the end of the sewing lesson, and then, as no one took any notice of me, I went to the tribune in the chapel and waited there until Papa came to take me home.

Here, in this quiet visit, I found my one consolidation. Was not Jesus my only friend? To Him alone could I open my heart. All conversation with creatures, even on holy subjects, wearied me. True, I sometimes felt sad because of the indifference shown me, but I would console myself by repeating this line from a beautiful poem Papa often recited for us: "*Time is thy barque and not thy home.*"

Young as I was, these words restored my courage, and even now, though I have outgrown many of the pious impressions of childhood, the symbol of a ship always delights me, and helps me to bear with my exile. Does not the Wise Man tell us: "*Life is like a ship that passeth through the waves; when it is gone, the trace thereof cannot be found*"?¹

When my thoughts turn this way, they soon lose themselves in the infinite. I seem already to touch the heavenly shore, and to feel Our Lord's loving embrace. In

my fancy, I can see Our Blessed Lady coming towards me, Papa and Mamma by her side, and in their company those four little angels, our baby brothers, and sisters. Then at last I taste, as in a dream, the true and unending joys of Home.

But before reaching our Heavenly Father's Home, I had many separations to endure upon earth. The same year in which I was made a Child of Mary, Our Lady took from me my dearest Marie,² the only support of my soul. Since the time of your entering Carmel she had been my spiritual guide, and I loved her so deeply that I could not bear to be deprived of her gentle companionship.

I no sooner heard of her determination than I resolved to take no further interest in anything here below, and I shed abundant tears. But tears at that time were nothing unusual; they flowed for the most trivial cause. I was most anxious, for instance, to advance in virtue, yet I went about it in a strange way. I had never been accustomed to wait on myself, or do any housework, and Celine always arranged our room.

Now, however, with the intention of pleasing Our Lord, I would sometimes make my bed, or, if

¹Wisdom v. 10.

²Marie entered the Carmel of Lisieux on October 15, 1886, taking the name of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart. [CARMEL.]

Celine happened to be out, I would bring in her plants and cuttings. Since it was for Our Lord's sake that I did these little things I ought not to have looked for any return. But alas! I did look for thanks, and if, unfortunately, Celine did not seem surprised and grateful for my small services, I was disappointed, as my tears soon showed.

Again, if I unintentionally offended anyone, far from making the best of it, I fretted until I became quite ill, thus increasing my fault instead of repairing it. Then when I began to be reconciled to the blunder, I would cry for having cried. In fact, I made troubles out of everything. But all this has come to an end. The favors God has showered upon me have wrought a complete change and I am no longer the same. Thanks to grace from above, transitory things cannot depress me, and as my thoughts revert to what I used to be, my heart overflows with gratitude.

Marie having entered Carmel, I could not tell her of my scruples, so I turned towards Heaven and confided them to the four little angels who had gone before me. I thought that these innocent souls, who had never known either sorrow or fear, ought to have pity on their poor little suffering sister. I talked to them with childish simplicity, and told them that as I was the youngest of the family, I had always been the

most petted and loved by my parents and sisters, and that if they too had remained on earth they would no doubt have given me the same proofs of affection. I told them also that the fact of their being in Heaven was no reason why they should forget me. On the contrary, since they could draw from the treasury of Heaven, they ought to obtain for me the grace of peace, and so prove that in Paradise they loved me still.

I had not long to wait for the answer: a sweet peace soon inundated my soul and I knew that I was loved, not only on earth but also in Heaven. From that day my devotion towards those blessed ones increased; I loved to talk to them, to tell them of all the sorrows of this exile, and of my great longing to join them soon in our Eternal Home.

End of Chapter Four



To Be Continued

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 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 5

Hidden Sons

My soul, dost thou hear the Voice of God, thy Father? He calls thee to still greater intimacy. Thou art His servant and His friend. He wishes to make thee His child.

To His faithful servitor, the Master gives His confidence; to His secret friend, He avows His affection; to His hidden son, He reveals His paternal tenderness.

This new and supreme communication of God is the fruit of self-surrender that has become habitual. God responds by intimacy of an altogether new character. He treats the soul as His beloved child.

A friend visits his friend only at intervals. The soul that is a

friend of God does not enjoy continuous converse with Him. Occupations, cares, urgent affairs prevent. She takes care to multiply her interior exercises, her meditations, her examinations of conscience, her spiritual readings. These are like so many visits to the Beloved. They are necessary; they preserve the friendship.

A son does not leave the paternal home. He is not a guest; he is a child of the house. He does not visit his parents; he spends his life with them. He works and takes his recreation under the affectionate eyes of his father and mother.

The soul, the child of God, performs the exercises that duty requires of her; as for the rest, she attends to God with

entire liberty. In her Father's Eyes she reads His least desires and executes them at once. When this duty is finished, God often calls her closer to Him. There are evenings passed in the bosom of the family, delightful hours when the Father shows inexpressible tenderness for His child, instructs her in her duty, initiates her more fully into His Own Life.

The docile soul surrenders herself to all the caresses of her God. She does not indulge in vain discourses and floods of tears. Tranquilly and lovingly, she looks into her Father's Eyes. This simple regard says all and delights the Heart of God. Sometimes she nestles closer to Him by an act of burning love, like a child who ardently embraces his mother.

The friend is obliged to see to his personal interests and those of his family. He has to keep accounts, regulate his expenditure, make out his budget. The soul that is a friend of God has not laid aside the care of advancement in the spiritual life. All her efforts tend to progress, to lessening her faults, to filling all the actions of her life with the love of God. There is exercise, struggle, incessant labor.

The soul that is the hidden child of God neither despises

nor disdains this painful toil; but it is not for her. She is a child of the house. Her Father and Mother have care of her interests, which are their own. She peacefully executes her Father's commands. If she commits a fault, her beloved Mother repairs all. She lives tranquilly in the bosom of her family. Does she not possess immense riches? Is she not the heiress of a kingdom? Her part is not to provide for the future, not to be anxious, but to please her Father, to love Him in the present moment, to manifest her love by unbounded tenderness and blind obedience.

The life of the true child of God is hidden from the eyes of men. God conceals this treasure from profane scrutiny. Moreover, the world could not comprehend an existence passed in the service and the love of God. It laughs at the simplicity of the just who despise earth's riches.

Ordinary people, even among Christians, do not appreciate the sublimity of a life consecrated to Jesus. The souls that are lost in God seem to them to be lazy and of no use upon earth. These ordinary people must have activity, movement, display. An existence spent in serving God in obscurity and retreat, without any apparent influence

upon the world, seems to them without merit and without profit for the Church.

It even happens that certain souls that are good, and dear to God, but who have not yet reached the heights where dwell His hidden children, are astonished at the simplicity of the secluded life. "Saints," think these good souls, "are distinguished by signal services rendered to the Church, by shining virtues and heroic actions. Here, on the contrary, all is simple, almost commonplace. Where is the merit, where the virtues, the sanctity? Here one sees only lowly actions, an ordinary existence, occupations without glory. There are no macerations, no long prayers. Here souls are content to lead the life of ordinary people. They are, it is true, affable, polite, charitable, punctual, but seldom seen in society. Sometimes they are unacquainted with the news of the day and the customs of the world. Sometimes they have no influence upon those around them, are of no importance, of no repute."

O my God, how the world mistakes the true merit of Thy children! This life, simple and without display, but all given to Thy Love, is the life "hidden with Christ in God," the life that the Apostle commends; it is the life led by the august

Mother, the Queen of Saints; it is a reproduction of the simple and obscure life of Jesus.

It is true that this life, ignored, despised, suffering, has been a scandal to the Jews, and to the Gentiles foolishness. It is true that, in our days, it is an object of ridicule and disdain to the worldly-wise; but is it therefore less sacred, less sublime, less divine?

Happy soul, hidden child of God, thou mayest care little for the disfavor, the pity, the sarcasm of the children of the world, and give small heed to their disapproval and their calumnies. Into the palace where thou dwellest, they have never penetrated. Their eyes could not bear the glory of this celestial home; their ears could not hear the divine language spoken there. Thou dost belong to another world than theirs; thou livest hidden in God; thou art His privileged child.

O child of the King, do honor to thy divine origin! Be not disquieted about thy spiritual fortune. Continue thy simple life in the Bosom of God. Carry out His Will; love Him with a boundless love. Fear nothing. Thou art rich, rich by right of inheritance.

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FRANCISCAN SAINTS

JANUARY 19TH

Blessed Thomas of Cori

Confessor, First Order

Blessed Thomas was born at Cori near Velletri in the Roman Campagna in the year 1655, and in Baptism received the name of Francis Anthony. His parents were poor shepherds, but very pious Christians, who by their virtuous teachings and good example reared their children in the fear of God.

It seemed that little Francis Anthony had in a very special manner inherited the gift of piety from them. His innocent demeanor and fervent devotion so distinguished him among his companions that he was quite generally called "the little saint."

He pursued his higher studies with great diligence and success in a school conducted by a devout canon of his native town. However, the poverty of his parents soon compelled him to discontinue his studies and to return to his father's flocks. But even in the quiet pastures amid the cliffs

and the woods, he never desisted from prayer and study.

When both of his parents had died, Thomas sold the flocks which he had inherited from them, presented the proceeds to his two sisters for their dowry, and then asked to be admitted to the convent of the Friars Minor at Cori. He was received in February 1677, and was sent to the novitiate at Orvieto, where he was invested under the name of Thomas. With redoubled fervor he progressed "from virtue to virtue." At Viterbo and Velletri he studied philosophy and theology with marked success, and finally, when he was twenty-eight years old, he celebrated his first Holy Mass amid tears of devotion and joy in the convent at Velletri.

After he had spent some time at Orvieto filling the office of novice master with much zeal and success, he begged his

superiors to allow him to retire to the exceptionally strict convent of Civitella near Subiaco, situated in a wild mountainous solitude, in order to sacrifice his life to God in strict penance, ceaseless prayer and work. Later on, when he was appointed superior of this house, he instilled into his brethren such love for religious discipline that Civitella soon became the model convent of the province.

He developed his companions into a band of zealous and courageous men, who traveled as missionaries to India and to China. One of them received the crown of martyrdom. His ardent wish to go with them was never fulfilled. Instead, the provincial superiors assigned him the Roman Campagna and the desert mountain region of Subiaco as his permanent field of labor. Here Thomas labored with the fiery zeal of a Paul for the space of twenty years, so that he was generally called the apostle of Subiaco.

When there was question of gaining souls, no journey was too distant or wearisome. Snow and rain, heat and cold, fatigue and vigils, hunger, thirst, and the painful wounds which the sharp stones made in his bare feet, were borne by

him with holy joy. As a reward for all this hardship, he saw great bands of sinners approach in order to be reconciled with God through him, who was at the same time gifted in reading hearts. He was often compelled to spend whole days and even nights without interruption in the holy tribunal of penance.

Here it was also that, as a seventy-four-year-old man, Thomas was attacked with a severe hemorrhage, which brought him to his deathbed. With heavenly patience and amid continuous prayer, he continued to suffer severe pain for several days, until, with the Crucifix in one hand and an image of the Blessed Virgin in the other, he went to his eternal reward while pronouncing the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. It was on the day and at the hour he had himself foretold, January 11, 1729.

His body reposes before the high altar in the convent church of Civitella. Pius VI beatified him on August 18, 1786.

SAINTLY YOUTH

1.) When Our Divine Lord saw the little children gathered about Him, brought there by their mothers, He said: "Suffer the little children to come unto

me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And he embraced them and blessed them (*Mark 10:14, 16*). But how much more lovingly will He look down upon children from the heights of heaven if like our "little saint" they distinguish themselves with piety and virtue! We may be sure that God often spares an entire household because of one innocent child, and that its prayer accomplishes more than that of all the other members. And granting that the child develops in grace and virtue along with its growth in years, how pleasing to God must a virtuous young man or devout young woman of the kind be! The cynical world says: "Youth will be served," and under the plea it would have us condone all the vices of the young. But the holy youths Aloysius and Stanislaus, as well as our Thomas, together with Saints Agnes, Elizabeth, and numerous others, prove by their brilliant virtues that the attitude is false. One should rather say: "Virtue's truth rhymes with youth." Or, are people to dedicate the flower of life to the world and to vice, and then, when the flower has withered away, consecrate the leavings to God? — Would you like to enjoy a happy youth? Then remain close to

God. He it is "who giveth joy to my youth" (*Ps. 42:4*).

2.) Consider to what extent our temporal and eternal welfare depends upon the practice of virtue during the time of youth. The proverb says: "What you have learnt to do in your youth, you will naturally do when you are old," and the Holy Spirit confirms this with the statement: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (*Prov. 22:6*). This can be applied to good habits as well as to evil ones. He who in his youth is not concerned about overcoming lesser faults, will by and by commit greater ones and will easily perish. But if we learn in our youth to deny ourselves, as Blessed Thomas did, to sacrifice our wishes — even good ones — and to bear poverty and want with patience, then we shall have the necessary strength to brave the storms of life, and we shall be prepared to endure cheerfully all labor and sacrifice for the good of our neighbor and the honor of God. With how much greater pleasure can such a person look back upon his youthful years, than he who served only the world and sensual pleasures!

3.) Consider the terrible responsibility he draws down upon himself who leads an innocent young man or a virtuous young woman into sin. "It were better for him," Our Divine Savior tells us, "that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea" (*Matt. 18:6*). This condemnation should not astonish us. Since the seducer robs God of a soul, he often ruins the young person's chances for the rest

of his life, and with them not infrequently also the high hopes of an entire family, plunging it into nameless woe. Yet, such serious misfortune can be caused in an apparently innocent manner. A sarcastic remark, teasing someone because of his piety, his modest reserve, his submissiveness, may all lead up to it. Endeavor rather, like Blessed Thomas, to encourage youth in the practice of virtue; that is one of the noblest acts of charity.

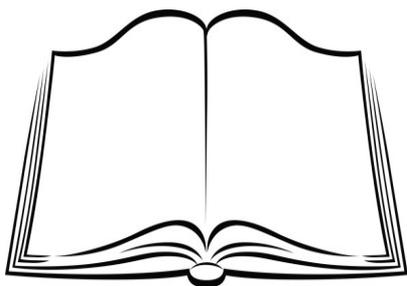


PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O God, who didst adorn Blessed Thomas, who was inflamed with Thy love, with the gift of interior mortification and an extraordinary love of his neighbor, grant us through his intercession and merits, that we may deny ourselves out of love for Thee, and by the constant practice of works of charity deserve to arrive at the eternal reward. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.



Just Stories



Winfried Herbst, SDS

“TAKE ME”

When do we think most of Bethlehem’s Babe, of the Infant Jesus? Is it not at Christmas time? Surely. But I wonder do we often stop to think that the birth of Jesus Christ is renewed in each and every Holy Mass. It is indeed true. In Holy Mass Our Lord’s life is renewed, hence also the nativity. “The priest calls Christ into being by his consecrated lips,” says St. Jerome. This is only one of the adorable mysteries of Holy Mass; and about this I am going to tell you a story.

Now, in the lives of the Fathers, those saintly men who lived many centuries ago and who lived an intense spiritual life for God and for God alone, we read of a devout priest named Plegus. He knew, of course, that Holy Mass is a deep and holy mystery; but so great was his love for the Savior that he ardently desired

to understand it better and better. He wanted to know just how our Lord is present after the Consecration.

But can it be that he did not know? He certainly knew, as you and I also know, that then Jesus is present whole and entire, with Flesh and Blood, Body and Soul, Humanity and Divinity. He knew that the Savior has in a twofold mode of existence: His natural existence, as He is at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, and His sacramental existence, as He is in the Blessed Sacrament. Always the same Jesus, you know, but in two different ways of being. Father Plegus knew all that, to be sure, and knew it much better than little minds like yours can know it. He did not doubt one bit. He just firmly believed. God can do everything. Still, he did so wish to see more clearly, even to see

and to touch the visible Body of Jesus.

One day when he was piously saying Mass this great desire actually to see the Savior seized him again. With tears he begged God to show Himself to him without the veil of the Blessed Sacrament. He wanted to embrace Him, caress Him, see the light of love in His eyes. It was after the Elevation.

While his heart was filled with this holy yearning something strange and startling happened. Can you guess? There at his side stood a brilliant angel in a glow of light. Really, he must have begun to fear, much the way Mary did when the angel appeared and told her she was to be the Mother of God. But the beautiful angel, in a voice full of the music of heaven, pointed to the spotless corporal and said, "Behold and see Christ here present in bodily form, as on His Mother's knee!"

The priest looked down upon the consecrated Host. And what did he see? Not the sacred Host in its place upon the corporal, but in its stead a Divine Babe so coy and lovely that it would have made the angels glow for very joy. It was the Christ Child. There He lay upon the lily-white corporal, a look of unutterable love in His eyes, a sweet smile

making roses of His ruby lips, His chubby little arms stretched out towards the happy priest with a mute, "Take Me." We know so well how dear babies often do it.

Such a sight! Such an invitation! Father Plegus hesitated. But the Child continued to stretch out its tiny arms for his embrace, and the angel softly said, "Fear not. It is the Infant Savior Whom you so often hold in your hands under the Sacramental Species. Take Him into your arms, O holy priest of God, let Him rest upon your heart."

Trembling with a joy no tongue can speak, no pen can describe, the priest took the Babe into his arms . . . caressed Him . . . kissed His rosy cheeks, held His soft little hands, pressed Him to his bosom. Ah, the bliss of holding Baby Jesus! Think of Mary, think of Joseph; think of the holy man Simeon at the Presentation. Truly, Father Plegus was thrice blessed that day at that wondrous Mass!

But what happened to the Infant Jesus? After a few moments in this heaven upon earth the good priest lovingly and tenderly placed Him upon the corporal again. Then, bowing low, he humbly prayed that the Child might resume His former manner of

existence, hiding Himself away under the appearances of the consecrated Host. No sooner had he thus prayed than the Christ Child disappeared and the fair white Host lay upon the corporal. Then, with a heart just overflowing with love the priest gave himself Holy Communion, receiving into his heart the God Whom, but a moment before, he had pressed upon his heart. O the wonders of Holy Mass and Holy Communion!

Which union was the closer, do you think? Was the holy priest closer to Jesus when he

received Him into his heart in Holy Communion than when he held Him in his arms? Of course he was! Than Holy Communion no union could be closer.

Here you see once more what a heavenly thing Holy Communion is. It is more than a visit to the real crib, more than taking the real, living Babe into your arms—it really and truly is! And this joy may be yours every day, if only you come in the state of grace and with a right intention.

“If thou didst but know the gift of God!”



Hope and Desire

Who Comes?

*The Word made flesh for me,
The Lord Who died for me,
The Love made food for me,
He comes!*

To Whom Does He Come?

*To one redeemed by Him,
To one allied with Him,
To one who longs for Him,
He comes!*

Why Does He Come?

*To reign upon His throne,
To reign supreme alone,
To make me all His own,
He comes!*

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