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THE SERAPH

DID WE REMEMBER TO PRAY?

Bishop Giles, OFM DD

Whatever the difficulty in our lives, we tend to look for natural causes and solutions before considering spiritual ones. The same is true with all the joys and pleasures that we experience in this life. On the surface, there is nothing evil or wrong with this. Natural things often do have natural causes and require natural solutions. However, we are supernatural beings with immortal souls. We should, first and foremost, consider the spiritual aspects of everything. These are the things that are necessary for the life of our immortal souls. It is the spiritual things that give life, meaning, and purpose to our lives' material or physical aspects.

When things seem to go awry in our day, we should first ask ourselves if we have asked for God's help and guidance. If we have forgotten to pray, this may be the very reason we are experiencing this present difficulty. We tend to become so engrossed in the things we must do today that we rise from bed, wash, dress, eat, and head off into the tasks set before us, without a second thought of God or our souls. Then, we wonder why we seem to be just

spinning our wheels. We are working hard but are making little or no progress. Or, perhaps, we are working hard, but the harder we work, the further behind we get. It often appears that everything that can go wrong does go wrong.

Rather than blame our family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc., we should examine ourselves a little more closely. Have we gotten our priorities out of order? What is most important, after all? When we were children, we learned the great truths and purposes of our lives. We learned of God and His creation and design. We learned of our purpose or reason for being. God made us in His Image and likeness, and His desire is for us to spend eternity happily with Him in Heaven. To reach this goal, we only need to know, love, and serve Him in this world. Everything else is secondary.

St. Paul teaches us that it does not matter if we work or play, keep vigil or sleep, fast or eat, etc. The caveat is that whatever we do that we do it for the love of God. If we exclude or forget about God, working only for worldly or material motives, we have spiritually wasted a lot of

time and effort. With the fruits of our perishable earthly efforts in hand, Jesus will tell us on Judgement Day that we have received our reward and have nothing to receive from Him. We worked for perishable things, and He rewarded us with them. If we do nothing to obtain supernatural merit, we will have none as we enter eternity.

How sad this is when it would have been so easy to obtain both the eternal spiritual merit and the temporal material reward by merely taking a couple of minutes to make a morning offering or any offering of our daily efforts to God. Suppose we would only make prayer an essential element in our morning routine. In that case, we could transform all our thoughts, words, and deeds into loving offerings to God and receive His help and guidance throughout our day, but even more importantly, we will store up rich treasures for Heaven.

When things do not seem to be going well, let us take a moment to pray. If we have forgotten to pray, this may be God's way of reminding us. This present cross is a grace and blessing from God if we only think to call upon Him. If we continue to ignore Him or even turn away from Him because of our cross, we will lose a lot of grace and merit. As the crosses increase, we need to recall Job in

the Old Testament. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Let us always bless the Lord. Every cross borne for the Love of Jesus is an increase in our love and merits ever-greater graces. When we accept our cross for the Love of Him, He has promised to make it light, sweet, and a real joy. Our crosses are heavy, bitter, and sorrowful because Jesus is not there with us. Humbly call upon Him before we take up the cross, and as we progress in carrying it, then our attitude and outlook will improve. Our supernatural treasure will increase.

We must call upon God, not only in difficulties but even more importantly, in the joys and pleasures of this world. God is the source of all good things. He has given us more good stuff than we can even begin to enumerate. He has thought of us (each individually) from all of eternity. Even before God separated the darkness from the light, we specifically existed in the Mind of God. God has brought us forth from nothing in the proper place, time, and circumstances. He gives us countless blessings every day to direct, lead, or help us to obtain our everlasting happiness with Him in Heaven. It appears that when everything is going well for us in this world, we forget about God even more than we do when we suffer under some burden. This forget-

fulness is truly the height of ingratitude. Is there any wonder that we think we seem to have more crosses than blessings?

We must praise God always and for everything. All that He does is good, and it is a beautiful expression of His love for us. Though we are often absorbed in physical activities, we can always sanctify them all with a

simple morning offering at the beginning of the day.

When we are presently surprised with something in our day, let us ask ourselves if we remembered to pray. When we are struggling through some unpleasant task, again, let us ask ourselves if we remembered to pray. It just takes a moment, but the results are everlasting.



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FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD

Watching the world news has lately impressed upon us that this world is not our home. From a moral and religious perspective, it is the farthest thing from home.

Not long ago, we read the latest Encyclical from Rome (“Fratelli Tutti”) and were shocked to see espoused the exact Atheistic Masonic terms of the French Revolution – “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.” Shortly after that, we heard politicians running for office openly declare that they do not care what god people worship or what religion they practice. They only desire to lead everyone together and forward.

The world situation makes us feel like the fictional character “Rip Van Winkle.” It is as if we have been asleep and then woke up to a vastly different society. The world today is unrecognizable to those still living with an idea of Gospel truth and justice.

The Masonic paper “Alta Vendita” (early 19th century) exposed and condemned by Catholic Popes appears to have achieved all of its Luciferian goals. The “Alta Vendita” plan

was a shift in the Masonic attack against the Catholic Church and national governments. Rather than directly destroying the Catholic Church and federal governments, the “Alta Vendita” plans to infiltrate the Catholic Church and governments and, through subversion, make them espouse Masonic practices, principles, and goals – indirectly and demonically destroying them all.

When world leaders and politicians have espoused complete indifference to God and Religion in order to promote a false “fraternity,” we have strayed far from the life of Jesus Christ, and Satanic Masonry has reached its goal.

Religion and the worship of God are not matters of indifference but are of vital eternal importance. It does make a difference for our eternal welfare, which god we worship, and how we worship him. There is only One True God, and Him alone must we serve and worship. There is no equality between demons or idols and God. The worship of one leads to Hell, and the worship of the other leads to Heaven. If we

are to practice true “fraternity” and love for our neighbors, then we must be primarily interested in each other’s eternal salvation. If I perceive my brother in danger and say or do nothing to warn him or help him, I cannot honestly say that I love him. Even more so, if I see my brother on the path to perdition and say or do nothing to warn him or stop him, it is certain that I do not love him. Indifference in the matter of eternal life is pure evil, but yet we seem to have turned religious indifference into a supreme “good.” What a demonic inversion of the right order!

Many are shocked by the endorsement of “same-sex marriage,” but they have no moral outrage for divorce and remarriage (adultery) or heterosexual fornication. Does it really make any difference if we go to Hell for same-sex impurities, heterosexual ones, or even solitary ones? Do we believe that in the interest of saving human infant life that it is good to seek to remove the shame from unwed motherhood? Can we tell her that God loves her just the way she is? Jesus indeed forgave the adulteress, but He did not tell her it was all right and that she could continue in her sinful life. His message was repentance from sin, then forgiveness with the command not to sin again.

The devils have twisted our hearts and minds upside down in the matters of sexual purity. Our societal and advertising perspective and focus is upon the pleasure of the reproductive organs. Sinners make every effort to frustrate and impede the God-given natural and biological function of these organs to pursue hedonistic sexual pleasure. God has indeed attached a natural delight to the sex act, but this is only a secondary blessing associated with sexual acts. God’s primary, natural, and biological design is that this act is, first and foremost, a reproductive one. Intelligence and reason aided by revelation point out that human reproduction needs to be confined to husband and wife so that a real family, mirroring the Blessed Trinity, is formed. A child needs the combined effort of a masculine parent (father) and a feminine parent (mother) in order to develop a healthy and balanced maturity.

Promoting sexual pleasure and at the same time discouraging or inhibiting reproduction naturally encourages: fornication, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, pedophilia, all kinds of sexual fetishes, infanticide in the womb, divorce, and the destruction of the family. The devils do not care which path we choose to enter into Hell with them. It is an easy matter

for them. All they need to do is divert us one way or another from the path to Heaven, and we are on the way to Hell.

In elections, we tend to focus upon “life” and desire candidates that are “pro-life,” but we appear to be unconcerned about other evils and sins that have led to the pro-death camp of abortion. Instead of being indifferent about our citizens’ religion, this should be a real and vital concern. We do not desire an atheistic nation or government, but this is what we are creating by the vice of indifference. If we truly love the sinner, we cannot be indifferent to his sins. We cannot accept his sinful life as a matter of no importance. Our every move, motivated by Charity, must help him overcome his sinful temptations and restore the right order of God’s grace and virtue into his life. This is the real purpose and goal of the Church and the State.

Masonic “peace” and “fraternity” are counterfeits – true peace and fraternity can only be found in the True Church and the True Faith. If our goals were True: Faith, Hope, and Charity, we would do so much better than with the demonically inspired Masonic goals of: “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.”

Liberty without morality ends in unrestrained hedonism and selfishness – just the opposite of true fraternity or brotherly love. Equality that denies the distinctions that God has created ends in universal suffering and hardship – it engenders suspicion and hatred. This, too, is in direct opposition to true brotherly love. Compassion for the materially poor or less advantaged with no concern for their souls is not true charity or brotherly love.

God made us all brothers because He is the Creator of us all. He is not an architect. He is the Creator. A creator makes things from nothing. An architect rearranges things that already exist. God is the Creator. The devils are architects rearranging God’s creation in rebellion against Him. Men trying to be women and women trying to be men is the architectural work of devils. The re-purposing of sexuality and sexual acts is the destruction and manipulation of devils – not God’s creation. Leaders (both political and ecclesiastical) that promote religious indifference and illogical “tolerance” are doing the work of demonic (Masonic) architects rather than the work of God.

TRUE OBEDIENCE

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD

“Without a doubt, obedience is more meritorious than any other penance. And what greater penance can there be than keeping one’s will continuously submissive and obedient?” (St. Catherine of Bologna)

In the First Book of Kings, we find that God ordered King Saul to destroy Amalec. *“Now therefore go, and smite Amalec, and utterly destroy all that he hath; spare him not, nor covet anything that is his: but slay both man and woman, child and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” (I Kings 15:3)*

King Saul took Agag, the king of Amalec, captive, sparing his life. And he did not destroy anything that was beautiful. King Saul kept the best of the flocks of sheep and herds. He only destroyed the things that were good for nothing. Samuel approached King Saul while the king offered sacrifices to God of these spoils that he kept and did not destroy.

“And Samuel said: ‘Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of the Lord should be

obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat of rams. Because it is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey.’” (I Kings 15:22-23)

In the spiritual life, we learn to sacrifice and how profoundly important it is to take up our daily cross and follow Jesus. However, this is not everything. We must also remember that we are called upon to deny ourselves.

The sacrifice of material things is, in the grand scheme of things, relatively easy. It is not so hard to sacrifice the things we possess for the love of God. Religious take a vow of poverty, but God provides for all their needs through the Church and Community, so the vow of poverty is relatively easy to carry. Perhaps, the vow of celibacy is a bit more difficult because we give up the right to a spouse and family. In this, too, we are granted a family in the religious community and the Church. The sacrifice involved in these two religious vows is compensated or alleviated in other ways,

making them much more tolerable than is first imagined.

The third vow, obedience, is the most difficult because it sacrifices our wills. We place our freedom or individuality upon the altar of God, and there is truly little in the world that can compensate or make up for the loss involved in this sacrifice. In our humble opinion, this vow draws the nearest to a complete and blind act of faith.

Religious Obedience is not merely doing what we are told. It goes even further by willingly and eagerly seeking to know the Will of God through our earthly superiors and then promptly and lovingly setting about to accomplish that Will. It is dying to ourselves. We deny our wishes, desires, or preferences so that we can give ourselves entirely to the fulfillment of those of our legitimate superiors for the love of God.

The sacrifice of our personal wills and desires is not without its own compensation. As we set aside our will, we simultaneously take up the Will of God. Fulfilling the Will of God is truly its own reward. Real joy is found in everything when we are doing God's Holy Will rather than our own. We experience joy as Saint

Paul did when he could say that it is no longer Paul, but Christ Jesus living within him. In setting aside our will and taking up the Will of God, we are truly living the life of Christ. Jesus Christ is living within us and through us. This spiritual compensation for our sacrifice is impossible to weigh, measure, or calculate. Perhaps, this is because the Life of God is infinite or because this is a supernatural thing rather than a natural one. Only those who have experienced this can completely understand.

These vows all together set the religious on the path of perfection. Through them, we draw the nearest to God – sacrificing our wills to do the will of God just as Jesus came not to do His Own Will, but rather the Will of His Father.

In the world, outside of the vows of Religious Communities, we are not bound by these vows. However, we are expected to follow Jesus in some capacity compatible with our state in life. Without renouncing all personal property, those in the world must strive to use the things of this world as if they used them not. They must practice the virtue of chastity according to their state in life. They must also practice the virtue of obedience to every

lawful authority that is placed over them. For all power comes from God.

Those outside the religious life gain grace and merit for the practice of these virtues, but those in holy vows gain even more reward because they are not only obeying the command of God but are also fulfilling a sacred vow to God. With one act, they gain two different merits.

Children are commanded to obey their parents and are blessed when they do so. Wives are called upon to follow their husbands and receive a double reward because they, like religious, fulfill a vow that they made to God on their wedding day. We must all seek to obey whatever authority is placed over us. If the command or directive of legitimate authority is not sinful or against our consciences, we are bound to follow. All power (religious, civil, secular) comes from God. In obeying legitimate authority, we are obeying God.

Disobedience or rebellion is the sin of the devils. When we give in to these sins, we are the farthest we can be from God and the closest that we can be to the devils. It does not matter how pious or holy we may appear in our prayers,

sacrifices, or offerings. Those in disobedience only simulate these wondrous and sacred things. They do not truly pray, sacrifice, or make offerings to God. It is of no use to offer God things that He detests or has condemned. King Saul tried this and failed. Obedience is the offering and sacrifice that is acceptable to God and makes every other offering pleasing to Him.

Disobedience in families destroys families. Disobedience in civil society destroys that society. Disobedience in religious communities destroys religious communities. Insubordination in the Church destroys the souls that would make up the Church. This demonic rebellion loves to put on the appearance of justice, truth, or right, but it is nonetheless satanic anarchy.

The commands to set aside the worship and practices of the Catholic Church are illegitimate and rightly should be refused. The continuance and insistence in demanding the dismantling of the True Faith force us to conclude that those giving these orders do not have legitimate authority. The absence of legitimate authority is a very frightening situation to be in, but this is where we are.

We must not, then, conclude that we are free of all our obligations of obedience. Religious and clerics cannot legitimately cast off their vows and enter marriage. Spouses made vows to God, and they must obey them even if no one else does or even if they are commanded to abandon them by some illegitimate “authority.” Those who are married are not free to set aside their vows to God and contract a different marriage even if they are encouraged or even commanded to do this.

The laity is not permitted to act as priests or take over the parishes. Priests are not free to shake off the yoke of obedience to true bishops. True bishops are not free to shake off the yoke of the traditions of faith, morals, and worship handed over to them when they received their Apostolic commissions.

The rebellion and disobedience of the Modernist Church in no way authorize the traditionalist sects’ disobedience and rebellion. When the shepherd is struck, the flock must continue to obey the directives previously given to it by legitimate authority. The most beautiful churches, rituals, and ceremonies erected or performed by those in willful disobedience to proper authority are nothing but abominations or demonic witchcraft.

We must obey God before man. Even when we do not have a physical person to watch over us, God’s laws still stand. When we are deprived of that visible authority, we must keep and observe that same obedience as before. We must perhaps become even better at this because we must enter into our superior’s mind and heart as if he were present and do what we know he would wish us to do.

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THE PASSION THROUGH THE EYES OF MARY

Father Anthony Lentz, OFM

The Blessed Virgin Mary had a very significant role during her Divine Son's Passion. The sorrow that she endured during the Via Dolorosa was so intense that, as St. Bernard of Clairvaux relates, it would have killed any one of us had we experienced it firsthand. We should not let that thought deter us from experiencing it secondhand, that is, as a subject of meditation. There can never be a more excellent subject to consider than the Passion of Christ, and there can be no better companion than His Sorrowful Mother. So let us use our mind's eye and place ourselves next to her. Let us try to feel her pain, her suffering. While pondering these things, Our Blessed Lady will surely help us receive many graces from her Divine Son if we learn to develop a sincere devotion to the Passion.

There are many methods that one could employ for this subject of meditation. I propose a straightforward one, a reflection based upon the

Franciscan Crown Rosary. The Franciscan Crown indeed focuses upon the Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin, but we may find inevitable corollaries between them and her sufferings during the Passion. I have used this meditation myself while reciting the Crown Rosary during Lent and every Tuesday and Friday (the two days within the week that we pray the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Dominican Rosary).

These thoughts are my own, inspired by Sacred Scripture and various spiritual authors, and I hope the reader will find them useful. Of course, if you should follow this method, I encourage you not to allow yourself to be restricted by these considerations but rather allow God to inspire you with other wholesome thoughts.

Let us now begin our meditation of each mystery.

THE ANNUNCIATION

The Annunciation is when the Angel Gabriel, on behalf of God, appeared before the young

Virgin to ask her to be the mother of His Divine Son. Mary agreed with an act of complete submission, "May it be done unto me according to thy word."

Thirty-three years later, she experienced a different type of "Annunciation." After Our Lord's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was taken, bound at the wrists, into the city. The news of His capture must have reached the ears of Mary rather quickly, for the report was buzzing around the city. It may have been St. John or St. Mary Magdalene or someone else who came to inform her. She must have recalled the words of Simeon – "...thy own soul a sword shall pierce," She now knows that this piercing has begun.

THE VISITATION

The Angel Gabriel informed Mary that her elderly-cousin Elisabeth was also pregnant. Moved by charity, she traveled to Elisabeth's home so that she may assist her during the last few months of her pregnancy. Upon hearing Mary's voice, the babe within Elisabeth's womb leapt for joy, and she asked, "How is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Mary responded to this with the prayer, "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!"

Mary now travels through the dark streets of Jerusalem, heading for the Temple. Throngs of on-lookers and conspirators here visit her. No kind words or greetings were given to her. What horrible calumnies must have reached her ears! What blasphemies against her Son! Perhaps she here remembered when Jesus, still an infant, was being hunted down by the tyrannical madman Herod, who sought His life. These jealous men desire the same thing, but they must try to destroy His reputation before they do that.

THE NATIVITY

When the Christ child was born, the Angels sang out to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace to men of goodwill." One wonders whether Mary even felt the cold of the night since the love that radiates from her Divine Son was filling her heart and soul — with a warming love.

What a contrast!!! The Sanhedrin did not seek to glorify Christ but only sought to slander His Name and mock Him. They did not cry out, "Glory to God..." but instead, they shouted His condemnation, "He is liable to death. Death! Death! Death!" Why, Mary, did they seek to kill your Son, the Son of righteousness? Why could they not be filled with the love that encompasses you?

They seek His death because they were envious. Envious? Envious of God? This is truly the sin of Satan, for seeking the death of Christ is nothing short of diabolical! Mary's Immaculate Heart breaks when hearing her Son slandered, humiliated, and condemned.

THE ADORATION OF THE CHRIST-CHILD BY THE MAGI

The Magi came from the East, seeking only to adore the Messiah!!! These three men were Gentiles, but they showed greater love for Christ than all the people in Jerusalem. They each brought Him a gift – gold, because He is a king; frankincense, because He is God; and myrrh, because He is truly man. Imagine the honor that they must have offered to Mary, the Queen Mother. This did not make her pompous and proud but instead humbled her. She did not look upon herself as a queen but rather as the handmaiden who was privileged to sit in the King of Kings' court.

Oh, Mother! Again, your Son is met by “three kings” who have not come to honor Him but rather to torture and kill Him. The three kings are Caiphas, who sought His death; Pilate, who, knowing He was innocent, allowed Him to die; and King Herod Agrippa, who mocked Him to scorn. What are the gifts now offered to Your Royal

Son? Instead of frankincense, they scourge Him. Instead of gold, they put on His head a crown of thorns. Instead of myrrh, they put on His shoulders an unbearable cross! He is among enemies; where can He find honor? Where can He even find comfort? The sword of sorrow continues to go deeper into Mary's heart!

THE FINDING OF THE CHRIST CHILD IN THE TEMPLE

After three days of walking through the streets of Jerusalem, searching and worrying, you finally found Jesus sitting in the Temple with the doctors of the Law. How happy and grateful both you and Joseph felt in seeing Him alive and well. How happy you were to see Him honored by these learned men, who marveled at His questions and answers. This was the first time you saw Him “about His Father's business,” showing men the way to salvation.

Now His Father's business continues, to bring about man's Redemption! Here Our Lord again walks the streets of Jerusalem. This time He carries on His shoulders an unbearable cross, leaving behind a trail of His Most Precious Blood. You find Him here, dear Mother, once again while on the way to Calvary. Look into the eyes of Your Son, those eyes so burdened and full of sorrow. No

words could be spoken that could be of any comfort to Him or you! There is no other explanation for these events than that they must be His Father's Divine Will! Look ahead now, Mother, to Calvary, and look upon His altar of sacrifice, for His death is near at hand.

THE APPARITION OF OUR RISEN SAVIOR TO HIS BLESSED MOTHER

After Our Lord rose from the dead, He appeared to His Mother. Although it is not recorded in the Bible, it is a solemn tradition that she was the first person to whom He appeared. Since she experienced the greatest loss, should she not have been first to be relieved? Now she sees her Son in His glorified Body, never to die again! She, herself, experiences a type of mystical resurrection! Oh, that joy that she felt must have been immeasurable; probably the most incredible joy she felt while on this earth!

Of course, before Our Lord could rise from the dead, He had to die. He suffered and died in the most ignominious way possible - the death of the Cross. For three hours, He suffered upon that gibbet! The nails were tearing his hands and His feet, and the weight of His body made the wounds increasingly larger. His Body

was an open wound, which continued to bleed, and the freezing air gave Him greater discomfort. The Crown of Thorns, still upon His head, continued to pierce deep within His skull, and His head was pounding with pain. The weight of His body was slowly suffocating Him, and He could find no comfort, no relief. These are, but a few of the physical sufferings that Our Lord experienced and Our Lady witnessed. Of course, these paled in comparison to His spiritual anguish. He knew that there would be a great number of souls that would never benefit from His suffering, for these souls would reject Him just like the Pharisees!

I do not enjoy telling His Mother that her presence was not a consolation to Him, but rather it added to His already unbearable sorrow. To watch His Holy Mother suffer was probably the worst of all His sufferings! This should leave us without any doubt that Our Lord gave Himself completely, as a Sacrifice for us. This He did out of love, and this love-filled the heart of Mary as well, so much so that she willingly became our Mother while at the Foot of the Cross.

THE ASSUMPTION AND CORONATION

On the day when Our Lady's sojourning upon this earth was

completed, she was taken up both body and soul into Heaven. This has been a dogma of the Church since 1950 and must be believed by all Catholics. The dogma does not specify whether or not she actually died, and we are allowed to believe either. The Franciscan Tradition is that she never died due to her being free from original sin and never committing actual sin. Being a Franciscan, I do hold to this pious belief. I imagine Our Lady kneeling in silent prayer, older and wiser, desiring to be reunited with her Divine Son. Then Our Lord appears behind her, touching her shoulder, and tells her that it is time to go home.

Instantly she is taken up into Heaven! When she enters, she is greeted by the souls of all the saints and the holy angels. She is crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth by the most Holy Trinity, before the entire heavenly court. There is a sacred procession in her honor, and she is led by the souls of those holy women who prefigured her – Judith and Ester. When she reaches the Eternal Throne, she is surrounded by those who were closest to her in life – St. Joachim, St. Anne, St. Joseph. She kneels before the throne of Almighty God, and the crown is placed upon her head, and then

finally she takes her place nearest to God for all eternity!

This is how I have pictured these things in my mind during meditation. Of course, it begs the question: how can we find a connection between these events and Our Lord's Passion? The connection becomes evident if we consider that after Our Lord died, the Passion continued in the person of Mary.

Although she would be assumed into Heaven on a future date, during the Passion, she watches her Son being taken down from the Cross and placed within her arms. She and those with her do their best to prepare His body before the evening – cleaning His wounds and wrapping His body with linen.

Although she would be Crowned Queen of Heaven and earth on a future date, she now watches her Son being “crowned” with the tomb. Perhaps while watching this, her only comfort was the knowledge that Jesus' sufferings were over and that His Father's Will had been accomplished.

“Is there one who would not weep, whelmed in miseries so deep Christ's dear Mother to behold?”

AMONG INFIDELS - BY DIVINE GRACE

Father Louis Vezelis, OFM

Chapter One - A Missionary Vocation

A vocation to be a missionary in a foreign country is, like any vocation in the Catholic Church, primarily an affair of supernatural grace. Just as one does not impose a vocation upon God, one does not give oneself a vocation to be a missionary. What does happen, at times and in ways known only to God, is the unusual manner in which a vocation finally realizes itself. I must also preface this account with another observation. Namely, that the ways of Divine Providence are sometimes quite devious even as far as the individual is concerned. There are some people who seem to know from earliest youth just exactly what they want to do, and they set all things in motion to achieve this goal. If anything regarding such a clear plan can be said, it is simply that I'm not one of those fortunate enough to see things with such precise clarity. Even the decision to become a priest was nothing as clear as the proverbial bell. But, for the sake of helping

other young men to set aside self-doubt and the possible search for a 'voice' to tell them they have a vocation, I will try to describe my own feelings at first.

To say that I heard celestial violins sweetly playing or the Blessed Virgin Mary nudging me, would be very far from the truth. Even when the local curate asked the eighth grade boys «Who wants to be a priest?» I reproached myself in no uncertain terms after having unwittingly raised my hand! What was worse - and I'll never forget that day - was that three of us eighth graders raised our hands and Father began to ask each one the horribly difficult question: «Why?» What can a young boy of such an age really say that would be intelligent? When it came to my turn, I didn't know what to say. Nevertheless, I blurted out. «I wish to say Mass.» This was the first time in my life that such an idea was actually verbalized and I confess, I could

hardly admit to myself that I could even dream of becoming a priest.

Our family was not the kind that saints come from. We were not bad ... we just weren't fantastically good. We were average and ordinary. We never missed Mass on Sunday because my widowed mother made sure that we were up and on our way to church as a group. Unlike others, I didn't even learn to serve Mass until I entered the seminary. I did, however, serve Benediction and was learning the Latin prayers. But then, I graduated.

The one important event in my life which I can still vividly point to was the time a missionary priest came to school with movies about the missions. He was a Holy Ghost Father. I had never heard of them before and still wasn't sure just exactly what a 'Holy Ghost Father' was.

The only Fathers that I was sure of were the Pastor of our parish who was tough and his tall, young assistant. Nevertheless, this Holy Ghost Father showed us movies of Africa and the poverty and misery of those poor Africans. We saw Holy Ghost Fathers dressed in white cassocks working in the hottest looking climate I could

imagine and under the most primitive conditions. At that time, I could not suppress a growing desire to go there and help those poor people. I suppose, this was the first stirring of a missionary vocation. First stirring it might have been, but it ended there. Or so I thought. Graduation led to enrollment in the only Catholic boys' High School in the city. I had gone to a public High School for entrance exams, but being shocked at the crudeness of these students, I made an effort to go to a Catholic school where I felt the environment would be much more like our parochial grammar school. I really didn't think in terms of 'environment' as much as the reality of being among what I thought were 'my own'. In High School, it just 'happened' that one of the boys in my homeroom 'happened' to mention that next year he was going to the Holy Ghost Missionary College in Cornwells Heights, PA. I felt a rekindling of interest as I thought to myself in naive and simple logic: Gee, then people DO go to those places! I tried to get as much information from this new friend with a special area of mutual interest. I was afraid to admit that I wanted to go, but that I was alone and fearful. I had never left home before.

Outside our immediate neighborhood there lay an unknown world to me. And every young boy is afraid of the unknown. It seems comical now: I was not afraid to think in terms of going to Africa to be a missionary. But I was afraid to go from my home to a place I had never seen in a small Pennsylvania village. Thanks to my new friend, I found the courage to make that 'dangerous' voyage and began to think positive thoughts about becoming a missionary priest.

That I would be a missionary was obviously God's plan for me. I can say this in retrospect. But the where and the how were anything but clear and direct. After two years of excellent formation at the Holy Ghost Fathers which I never forgot nor ever ceased to praise, I left. It seems we always have periods of doubts about our vocation because we

are still young and inexperienced both in life and grace. I went home. And as I walked out of the courtyard of the seminary, I paused, turned around and took a last look at the gray granite building with a white statue of the Blessed Mother.

At this point I would like to give a word of advice to mothers: when you get lonesome for your little boy, please do not write and tell him all your little woes. He, too, is not heartless and insensitive. Though he may seem to you unfeeling and lacking in understanding, a boy is a boy and he feels like a boy. I think that more true vocations have been spoiled and lost because mothers were unable to help their sons realize God's designs in them.

God works in strange ways, I have said, and I believe that. Even though these strange



*Korean Priest
and Father
Louis, OFM in
Tokyo, Japan,
1957*

ways sometimes upset us. At the age of eighteen I applied for entry with the Franciscans in Maine. I would have applied to the Holy Ghost Fathers, but I thought that they would not receive someone who had left. I left, incidentally, because of difficulties at home. But my own mother soon understood the mistake she had made by getting me to come home. The Franciscans wrote to me and suggested I come to Maine, to their monastery. I went. I was accepted and what seemed to me a life of routine stages had begun. Everything seemed fine until I entered the novitiate in Teutopolis, Ill. There I was to learn just what a Franciscan was all about. It all appealed to me - even the never-easy rising at Midnight to chant the Divine Office. I listened attentively to everything the Novice Master said. I read every book carefully which he instructed me to read. This youth of nineteen - going on twenty - was learning the seriousness and sublimity of a Franciscan vocation. The year of novitiate was a joy. Not always easy nor devoid of human difficulties; but, nevertheless it is truly what everyone says: the best and happiest years of a young man's life. And I know why. It seems that it's taking forever to get to the

point of how I became a missionary to a little oft-persecuted country like Korea. There's a reason for this apparent sidetracking. And the reason is that the thread of continuity may grow imperceptible at times, but it is always there. The interesting aspect is precisely in the showing of how totally unrelated events make up inscrutable moments in a plan drawn up by Divine Providence.

In 1950, on July 5, I made simple vows. These vows are also called 'temporary' vows because they are made for a period of three years. During this time, I left the Novitiate which was in the jurisdiction of the Sacred Heart Province of the Franciscan Order, and was sent for my philosophical studies to the Province of the Immaculate Conception. The philosophy house was located in a small resort town of literary fame: Catskill, New York. The first year I could look out my cell window and see in the distance the Catskill Mountains with the legendary 'Rip Van Winkle' sleeping on top of them. The following year, my cell was facing the Hudson River which flowed below. It was a majestic scene. But it didn't take long to get so used to seeing it every day that, it became as common as any

rock or tree on the grounds. It was here that I made some statements which I would later recall in disbelief. For example, there was a student whose name was Friar Isaac Jogues. Can you imagine a Franciscan with a name like 'Isaac Jogues'? You'd expect a good Jesuit to have a name like that! Nevertheless, Isaac Jogues always talked about being a missionary to Japan. This was his secret and not-so-secret ambition. Isaac was a member of the Mission Circle which I would not join because I didn't think I would find anything of personal value in it. My vocation was not in that direction - or so I thought. Besides Friar Isaac Jogues, it is well to mention that another of my dear confreres - the really few friends that I had - was Friar Gerald Scarpone. Gerald was a real friend: he was patient and understanding of my own difficulties as an outsider - I had come from another Province to make my studies. We were all Franciscans, to be sure, but each Province had its customs and peculiarities. Friar Gerald is now a bishop in Honduras! The course of life is strange. Friar Isaac Jogues never got to go to the missions I understand. And at that time, in order to emphasize the utter futility of his dreams and their

chances of realization, I said: «Isaac, before you ever go to Japan, I will be there!» This was said in 1952. And in 1957 I was sitting in the Franciscan Friary in Den-en-cho-fu, Tokyo! But, it would be too easy to simply say that I was sitting in Tokyo. There is still the unusual and dramatic designs of God that led me to Tokyo and ultimately to Korea. There is a kind of subconscious preparation that was going on - even to studying of a language of a country I never in my life expected to see: Japan. After leaving Catskill, New York, there was the question of where would I be sent to pursue my theological studies. Most of my other confreres were attending the courses in the Province of the Holy Name. This, it seemed, would be the normal course of events for me, too. But it wasn't. I had heard of the French-Canadian Franciscans. They were known throughout the continental United States for the strict observance of the Franciscan Rule. We in the States were rather 'lax' by their standards - having comfortably rationalized ourselves into conformity with non-Catholic views.

It was an almost impossible request. But I asked anyway: I asked to be sent to Canada for

my theological studies. Everything militated against the possibility: I knew no French; all our Friar-students were studying by now in one American Province for the sake of uniformity of formation. I asked and I received. It was in Canada that I found Religious life not only in books, but in reality. In the United States, all we got was excuses and rationalizations that had a definite direction: gradual reduction of Religious life to zero. It was in Canada that I met missionaries from far-flung countries. But, I never thought this life would be possible for me. It seemed to me that my course was already mapped out for me and that this chart had no foreign ports for me. I was resigned to my future work among Lithuanians. And this did not really bother me because the challenge of learning the language in order to preach in it later was work enough. I would spend an hour on one sentence in a newspaper until I understood each word completely. Theological studies in the French language were not easy. More fearful than the classes, however, was any exit from the monastery to the outside world. My greatest fear was to have a French-Canadian talk to me thinking that I were French. This happened very often. The experi-

ence was devastating, at first. As time passed, however, and the language began to be a part of me, I was able to venture out with greater reassurance. Something happened in my third year of theology that I could not even explain to myself. One day, while looking through some old books lying in the attic, I came across a book on Japanese. I had never seen Japanese before. It was very intriguing. The book had belonged to a missionary Friar in Japan. That year, during Lent when we skip breakfast and have thirty extra minutes before classes, I decided as a Lenten sacrifice to learn Japanese! I confess that I had absolutely no idea whatsoever of becoming a missionary to Japan, or any other Far East country. In fact, there was a student in theology from the Orient who was later to become my Superior in Korea. He it was who even suggested that I go to Korea. And my honest answer was a definite and categorical: «Jamais! - Never!»

To Be Continued



ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

An Autobiography

CHAPTER FIVE VOCATION OF THÉRÈSE

I was far from meriting the graces showered upon me by Our Lord. I had a constant and ardent desire to advance in virtue, but how numerous were the imperfections that were mingled with my acts! My extreme sensitiveness made me almost unbearable, and all arguments against it were simply useless; I could not correct myself of this miserable failing.

How then could I dare hope to be soon admitted into Carmel, since nothing short of a miracle was needed if my childish ways were to be altered? But God wrought the desired miracle on December 25, 1886. On that blessed Christmas night, the sweet Infant Jesus, scarce yet an hour old, flooded with His glorious sunshine the darkness into which my soul was plunged. In becoming weak and little for love of me, He made me strong and brave, He placed His own weapons in my hands, and I went from victory to victory, beginning, so to speak, "to run as a giant."¹ The fountain of my

tears was dried up, and from that time they flowed neither easily nor often.

I must tell you here, dear Mother, the circumstances under which I received the priceless grace of my complete conversion. On reaching home, after midnight Mass, I knew I should find my shoes in the chimney-corner, filled with presents, just as when I was a little child, a fact which proves that I was still treated as a baby. Papa loved to watch my enjoyment, and to hear my cries of delight as I drew each fresh surprise from the magic shoes, and his pleasure added considerably to mine.

But the hour had come when Our Lord desired to free me from the failings of my childhood, and take from me even its innocent pleasures. He permitted that Papa, instead of indulging me in his usual way, should feel annoyed, and as I went upstairs I overheard him say: "All this is far too

¹Cf. Ps. xviii. 5.

babyish for a big girl like Therese, and I hope this is the last time it will happen.” These words cut me to the very heart, and Celine, knowing how sensitive I was, whispered: “Don’t go down just yet, you would only cry if you looked at your presents before Papa.” But Therese was no longer the same—Jesus had transformed her. Choking back my tears, I ran down to the dining room, and making every effort to still the throbbing of my heart, I picked up my shoes and gaily drew out the presents one by one, looking all the time as happy as a queen. Papa joined in the laughter and there no longer appeared on his face the least sign of vexation. Celine thought she must be dreaming, but happily it was a sweet reality, and Therese had once for all regained the strength of mind which had left her when she was four and a half.

On this radiant night began the third period of my life, the most beautiful of all the most filled with heavenly favors. Satisfied with my good-will, Our Lord accomplished in an instant the work I had not been able to do during years. Like the Apostles, I might have said: “Master, we have labored all night and have taken

nothing!”² More merciful to me than to His beloved disciples, Jesus Himself took the net, and casting it, drew it out full of fishes: He made me a fisher of men. Love and a spirit of self-forgetfulness took complete possession of my heart, and thenceforward I was perfectly happy.

One Sunday, on closing my book at the end of Mass, a picture of the crucifixion slipped partly out, showing one of the Divine Hands, pierced and bleeding. An indescribable thrill, such as I had never before experienced, passed through me; my heart was torn with grief at the sight of the Precious Blood falling to the ground, with no one caring to treasure it as it fell. At once I resolved to remain continuously in spirit at the Foot of the Cross, that I might receive the divine dew of salvation and pour it forth upon souls. From that day, the cry of My dying Savior: “I thirst!” resounded incessantly in my heart, kindling within it new fires of zeal. To give my Beloved to drink was my constant desire; I was consumed with an insatiable thirst for souls, and I longed at any cost to snatch them from the everlasting flames of hell.

² Luke v. 5

In order to enkindle my ardor still further, Our Divine Master showed me how pleasing to Him was my zeal. About this time, I heard people speak of a notorious criminal, Pranzini, who had been condemned to death for several horrible murders. He was impenitent, and in consequence it was feared he would be eternally lost. Longing to avert that greatest of misfortunes, a calamity beyond all repair, I employed all the spiritual means I could think of to obtain the ransom of this poor sinner; and knowing that of myself I could do nothing, I offered up the infinite merits of Our Savior together with the treasures of Holy Church.

In the depths of my heart, I felt convinced my request would be granted, but, that I might gain courage to persevere in the quest for souls, I said in all simplicity: “My God, I am sure Thou wilt pardon this unhappy Pranzini, and I shall still think so even if he does not confess his sins or give any sign of sorrow—such is the confidence I have in Thy unbounded mercy. But, because this is my first sinner, I beg for just one sign of repentance to reassure me.”

My prayer was granted to the letter. Though Papa never allowed us to read newspapers, I did not consider it an act of disobedience when, on the day following the execution, I hastily opened the paper, *La Croix*, and looked for the part concerning Pranzini. What was it I saw? . . . Tears betrayed my emotion, and I was obliged to run from the room. Without confession or absolution Pranzini had mounted the scaffold, and the executioners were dragging him towards the fatal block, when all at once, apparently in answer to a sudden inspiration, he turned round, seized a crucifix which the priest held towards him, and kissed Our Lord’s Sacred Wounds three times!



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 TWO

The Life of Self-Forgetfulness



Article 1

*What does it mean to
forget oneself?*

The soul that has given herself, no longer belongs to herself. In her own eyes she no longer exists, no longer lives in herself, but in Him to Whom she is consecrated. She no longer has any interests save those of the Master.

To forget oneself—this is, therefore, the great law of the whole spiritual life.

To forget oneself is to exclude from one's actions, sufferings and prayers, all human calculations, all reservations for self-love, all egoistic intention.

To forget oneself is to accept simply, from the Hand of God, all crosses, all contradictions, without complaint, without

examining their duration, their nature, regarding them as if they concerned someone else.

To forget oneself is to be moderate in seeking personal satisfactions, avoiding those that are unlawful, and choosing only those which Providence offers.

To forget oneself is to estimate self at its just value, that is to say, a sinful nothingness; it is to turn one's attention and the attention of others away from one's own person, qualities, and works; it is even to avoid an anxious and unduly prolonged search into one's own weaknesses.

To forget oneself is to disappear from one's own sight by an act of the will, and nevermore to find, in self or in others, in persons or in things,

ought save Jesus and His Holy Will.

Jesus says: "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself." Let him who desires to have part in the Resurrection of Jesus consent first to die with Him; let him who wishes to rise with Jesus, glorious, from the tomb, first descend thither with Him; let him who desires to save his life begin by losing it.

Self-forgetfulness is renunciation, mortification, humility, death to self. Self-forgetfulness is universal spoliation.

And what is it that despoils the soul that is surrendered to God? It is love. Love is tyrannical. It exacts everything; it concedes nothing. When it has succeeded in taking entire possession of the soul, it makes her the poorest of creatures.

The ordinary soul is able to provide for the future, to arrange plans, to form projects. She may choose her occupations, her distractions, her pleasures; she may allow herself to be the center of the esteem and consideration of others; at pleasure she gives or refuses her affection and her intimacy; she enjoys herself, and she is glad to be alive.

The soul over whom love tyrannizes has lost all. She is mistress neither of her intelli-

gence nor of her will, neither of her thoughts, her time, nor her health. Nothing is left her. Aspirations, tastes, talents, all that constitutes the wealth or pride of others, all are taken away from her; all pass to the service of the Master.

And the soul is pleased with this spoliation. She rejoices that she is deprived of her very self; she fears to take back her goods; she begs Jesus never to restore them. Oh, divine folly! Jesus, teach us to forget ourselves.

Article 2

How the simple soul practices self-forgetfulness in all things

The soul that has forgotten self dwells deep in God. Her life is marvelous in its simplicity; but she does not attract the attention of the many.

A self-abandoned soul, a simple soul—it is all the same. A soul entirely surrendered to God looks only in one direction. Her attention is fixed upon God. She moves only in one direction; and this movement brings her to God in all her actions and establishes her in Him, so that she never descends toward self. There is perpetual flood-tide toward the divine Ocean, a tide which is never followed by an ebb.

By its nature, simplicity excludes reflection upon self.

The soul that is surrendered to God does not dwell upon self. She does not consider her good actions, the purity of her life, the merits she is continually accumulating. She does not inquire what others think of her. She does not try to interest others in her person, her actions, nor even her faults and defects. She does not aspire to love or to be loved upon earth. That would be an act of proprietorship to which she has no right. For herself she does not seek the approbation, the favor, the good will of any man, for, being nothing, she can pretend to nothing.

The soul that is given to Jesus ardently love's her Divine Master. She expresses this love to Him in a thousand different ways. At every moment she finds new means of pleasing Jesus, for love is ingenious. But this love is simple; it does not return to itself.

The soul loves in tribulation, temptation, darkness, desolation, as well as in time of light and consolation. And if Jesus pours floods of His superabundant tenderness upon her, if He inundates her with delight and inebriates her with love, the soul receives these caresses; she allows herself to be pressed to the heart of Jesus and cradled in His Arms.

The simple soul never asks Jesus the reason of His conduct toward her. Is she not like clay in the hands of the potter? She is well aware that the forms given her by Jesus are strange; but can the vessel say to him that fashions it: "Why hast thou made me thus?"

She knows, too, that the ways by which her Divine Guide conducts her are incomprehensible; but can she give advice to Eternal Wisdom? Fearlessly she advances under His guidance, without looking anxiously into a future which she does not know, without being preoccupied with a past which now exists only in God.

Only the present concerns her. And she uses it without passion. She knows that here upon earth all work, all occupation, is a pastime for her. The Master could dispense with her services. If He requires her to do some work for His glory, it is because He wishes to lessen the tedium of her exile.

Therefore, she does not make any distinction among the different tasks given her by obedience. All are good, for all are ordered by God.

Sometimes the service God asks is agreeable to her and conformed to her taste. For this she thanks God, and accepts this satisfaction in all

simplicity, but without dwelling upon it.

Sometimes the work is hard; it involves disagreeable meetings, painful relations, humiliations, persecutions. The soul that has forgotten self pays no attention to what makes her suffer, causes mortification or humiliation. She lives not for herself but for the Master. She gives no heed to the wrong done to her, the dishonor with which she is overwhelmed, the contempt which she must undergo. How can she see it, she who is no more? Imperturbably she continues the work begun for the glory of God, even though she must succumb beneath the task, even though she is crushed under

the blows of insult or persecution.

The simplicity and unselfishness of the soul are often a cause of astonishment in this world where all is duplicity and egoism. Creatures sometimes attempt to exploit this uprightness and innocence, for their own profit. They lay snares for the soul and try to deceive her good faith.

But the simple soul, being nothing in her own eyes, having forgotten herself, is not liable to surprise. Others are dealing, not with her, but with God; and they attempt to ensnare and entangle, not the soul, but God Himself.

The Catholic Faith

RADIO PROGRAM

The Catholic Faith Radio Program is broadcast live each Friday from 1:30-4:30 p.m. (CST) in the studios of KRFE AM580, Lubbock, Texas.

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FRANCISCAN SAINTS

FEBRUARY 21ST

The Servant of God

Jordan of Mai

Confessor, First Order

Pope Pius X once remarked that it is peculiar to the saints of our day that they attain to prominence less through extraordinary deeds than through simple fidelity in their ordinary duties. Such was also the case with this servant of God, all of whose life of virtue and estimation in the eyes of God became known only after his death.

Brother Jordan was born on September 1, 1866, in Westphalia. His parents were poor in earthly possessions, but rich in the fear of God and in thrift. Until he was twenty-nine years old, Henry, as Brother Jordan was known in the world, worked as a simple laborer and true soldier. In 1895, he became a Franciscan brother and spent the last fifteen years of his life in the Franciscan Friary at Dortmund.

In the convent he lived a quiet and retired life, although those who were more closely associated with him, knew him to be a very conscientious, diligent, and humble religious. In his interior life he attained to a high degree of mysticism. After the

reception of Holy Communion holiness verily radiated from his eyes. In his humility he always wished to be assigned to the lowliest offices. This humility he copied from Our Blessed Lady, and he always regretted that the invocation, "Virgin most humble," was not added to the Litany of Loreto.

His charity towards his neighbor made him particularly agreeable to his fellowmen. No one who ever had any dealings with him, could recall his having in any way, either in word or deed, failed against charity. But he was always on the alert to perform acts of charity for others.

It was one of his greatest delights to serve the priest at Holy Mass. Franciscan cheerfulness radiated from his whole being. Only God knows all that he did and suffered and prayed for the conversion of sinners during his lifetime, and still more after his holy death.

On February 20, 1922, he prepared himself for death. "Now I am going to heaven," he said in his simple way to his confessor.

The extraordinary answers to prayers directed to him cover such a variety of needs and are so striking that the faithful believe he is really with God, and he has been called “the St. Anthony of Dortmund.” The great host of Brother Jordan’s clients in the Old and the New World are firmly convinced that the honor of the altars will be granted to him in the near future.

With the approbation of the bishop of Paderborn and in the presence of his representatives, the body of Brother Jordan was exhumed and placed in a new coffin on October 10, 1932.

ON BEING USEFUL IN INFIRMITY

Many people are dissatisfied in time of infirmity. They are ill-advised. The Apostle of the Gentiles even says: “I glory in my infirmity” (*2 Cor. 11:30*). And Brother Jordan, who was exteriorly not attractive, whose talents were hardly average, who was somewhat awkward in his ways, never complained about these deficiencies nor about corporal sufferings. He accepted all with resignation to God, and abided by the principle: “Always be cheerful; God will continue to see you through.” — May you

also be as happy and as resigned to God’s will.

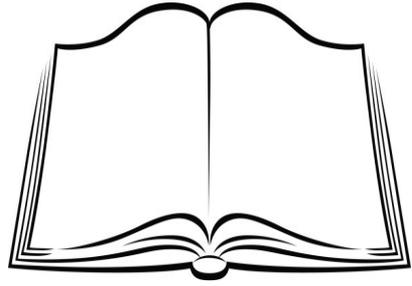
Many people consider themselves useless in infirmity. That, too, is foolish. Brother Jordan performed his duties as well as he could; in the eyes of God, that is the main thing. The sense of the words, “Peace to men of good will” (*Luke 2:14*), fits in well here. God looks more to the will than to the deed. And the servant who gained two talents in addition to the two that had been given him, received the same reward as the one who gained five in addition to the five he had had (*Matt. 25*). — Hence, do not lose heart.

Infirmity has its advantages. It keeps us little and humble, and preserves us from pride and conceit. It inclines us and prepares us to be indulgent with others. For that very reason Our Dear Lord took upon Himself the miseries of our human nature so that He could “have compassion on our infirmities” (*Hebr. 4:15*). Are you in misery, then pray much for poor sinners, as Brother Jordan did, and you will accomplish more than you imagine — rejoice, therefore, in your infirmities.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*We beseech Thee, O Lord, through the saving means of Thy mercy, support our infirmities, so that what of its nature tends to sink to earth, may be supported by Thy mercy.
Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

Just Stories



Winfried Herbst, SDS

“TEARS”

Before I forget it, I must tell you a story that is too good to be forgotten. Just listen with both ears and then lock it up in your heart. It is a little treasure.

A great, great sinner was once brought to a hospital, sick unto death. He had, alas, led a very wicked life; and now he was about to appear before his Judge, Christ Jesus, for whether we are good or bad, we must all go back to God – we must die. And after death comes the judgment. We are lent to the earth for only a little while, in order that we may prove ourselves worthy of heaven.

Now, when this great, great sinner, who had committed murder and robbery and many other dreadful crimes, arrived at the hospital, the Sister who was given charge of him offered him a crucifix to kiss.

Did he kiss it? Yes, he was truly sorry for all his sins; he kissed it over and over again; he prepared for a happy death. And when he thought of how good God had always been to him and how bad he had been to God, he cried and cried as though his heart were breaking. And it really was! Such was the abundance of his tears that the Sister had to use one handkerchief after the other to dry them up. You see, he received the grace of the gift of tears – maybe because he was good to somebody at some period of his life.

Then he dies, still weeping over his sins. Now, it happened that a holy man lay in a bed next to his. And when he saw the sinner die, he thought within himself, “Ah, what will the result of his judgment be?” And because he was a holy man, God let

him have a vision. He saw that wicked man's judgment.

Yes, he saw an angel put all the sinner's crimes on one scale of a huge balance. Down it went, down to the very bottom, and up went the scale on the other end of the beam: the sins were so heavy. "Now," thought the holy man, "what can the angel put on the other side that will as much as balance this fearful weight of crimes?"

Thereupon, he saw the angel put on the other side one little tear-soaked handkerchief that the Sister has used to wipe away the sinner's tears of sorrow. Scarcely had he placed it there when down it went and up came the other side, as though it were laden with a feather or nothing. Then the holy man

understood. And he praised God's mercy and goodness.

What did he understand? Why, that tears of heartfelt sorrow for having offended the all-good God weigh more with Him than years and years of sin; that perfect contrition, which is sorrow and hatred for sin because it offends God Who is infinitely good in Himself and worthy of all our love, blots out all sin in the wink of an eye and causes the All-merciful to forgive and forget forever.

And remember this, they need not be real tears from the eyes. If only the heart weeps it is enough. When does the heart weep? When it turns in true love towards God with genuine sorrow for sin – because He is so very, very good.



“Humility is necessary not only for the acquisition of virtues, but even for salvation. For the gate of Heaven, as Christ Himself testifies, is so narrow that it admits only little ones.”

~St. Bernard

GENERAL INFORMATION

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