

# THE SERAPH

October 2025

Vol. XLVI No. 2



*Youth Retreat in Rochester, New York*

# The Seraph

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### EDITOR

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM

### PRODUCTION

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM

Mr. Francis Y. No

Sister Catherine, TOR

### CONTRIBUTORS

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

Fr. Anthony Lentz, OFM

### CIRCULATION

Bishop Giles Butler, OFM

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ALL CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE SENT TO :

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

TELEPHONE: (585) 621-1122

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

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

[franciscanfathers.com](http://franciscanfathers.com)

[www.catholichour.org](http://www.catholichour.org)

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**THE SERAPH**

# THE GIFT OF A RETREAT: YOUTH RETREAT 2025

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*Sister Catherine, TOR*

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Many of our readers are aware that we host an annual children's retreat at St. Joseph's Mission in Union, Kentucky, for children aged 3 to 13. This event started with a large number of young children who, much to their parents' dismay, are quickly growing into teenagers and young adults.

At the close of the children's retreat in 2024, my friend Bridget and I were having dinner with two teenagers who had come with Father Anthony from Wisconsin. Bridget, with her usual wisdom, asked them how they enjoyed the retreat. They replied that they thought it was great, and since they had a younger sibling as well as a growing number of nieces and nephews, they hoped they would be able to attend one year. It was clear, however, that they felt a bit too old for this particular retreat. We then asked if they would consider attending a youth retreat if we offered one, and they were quite enthusiastic about the idea.

In my experience, teenagers and young adults often face challenges related to their faith, especially as they encounter people who question Catholic

beliefs. To help them navigate these challenges, support is crucial. This support should come not only from peers who are also Catholics but also from building rapport with adults, particularly clergy and religious, so that young people feel comfortable seeking assistance.

With this in mind, I quickly set out to make a youth retreat a reality. Within days of developing this idea, I obtained Bishop Giles' permission to organize our first Youth Retreat in Rochester, New York.

My next order of business was to consult Father Anthony about the dates, as we wanted him present as another member of the clergy, and he was willing to drive many of our teens to Rochester. Since he is very motivated to help our youth, we easily reached an agreement.

In early 2025, we sent a flyer to families with children aged 13 and older. I was somewhat resigned to the possibility that we might not receive any responses, as I tend to be cautiously optimistic. However, I was pleasantly surprised when we not only heard from families in Wisconsin and Ohio but also

received a response from a family in Texas. Ultimately, we had teens attending from Kentucky, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Texas. Along with two adult chaperones, we had a total of eleven attendees.

As this was our first retreat, there were many details to finalize. The plan was for attendees to stay at the house, which meant ensuring we had adequate bedding, towels, and other essentials.

Once we had that sorted out, the next step was to create a menu. Our retreat started with dinner and orientation on Monday, June 9th, and continued through Thursday, June 12th. Those who know me well understand that I take balanced meals seriously, so it was enjoyable to plan how to achieve this with ten meals. I believe everyone appreciated the meals, especially when I brought out homemade cookies from the freezer. Remember, it's all about balance!

Finally, we needed to establish a daily schedule. Each day began with the highlight of our experience: Holy Mass celebrated by His Excellency, Bishop Giles Butler, OFM. At each Mass, His Excellency delivered a conference tailored specifically for the youth. (These conferences can be found on our YouTube Channel.)

Each morning after breakfast brought a new opportunity. On Tuesday, we engaged in a string art craft. On Wednesday, we enjoyed a picnic and went hiking at a local park. On Thursday, we held a question-and-answer session, utilizing our question box where the youth could submit their inquiries anonymously.

Before lunch, everyone gathered in the chapel for the recitation of the Rosary in Latin. After lunch and some free time, we dedicated Tuesday to teaching the youth how to polish the sacred vessels. On Thursday, we assigned the youth to create video reels highlighting the retreat. These videos can be found on our YouTube channel.

After dinner and leisure time, everyone gathered for evening prayers. Once dismissed for the night, the children could play board games while following the shower schedule. Lights out was at 11:00 PM.

We found the retreat to be quite successful and learned a lot. Additionally, we gathered feedback from our youth on what activities might be interesting for next year.

Everyone appeared to have a wonderful time, but don't just take my word for it; here is what they said:

*“The youth retreat was an entirely transformative experience.”* MaryClaire, 18

*“My favorite thing was seeing the falls.”* Dominic, 12

*“I really enjoyed making new friends that I could relate to and visiting the falls at Letchworth State Park.”* Jasmine, 15

*“My favorite thing about the retreat was when Father Anthony was voice acting – the fun that never ends!”* Aubrey, 13

*“My favorite thing was how informative Bishop Giles’ sermons and talks were.”* Grace, 13

*“My favorite thing about the youth retreat was making friends and meeting new people who share my religion.”* Theda, 13

*“My favorite part about this youth retreat was all the friends I made and learning the Rosary in Latin.”* Rory, 15

*“My favorite part of the youth retreat was making new friends, saying the Rosary in Latin, and enjoying all of God’s blessings!”* Beatrice, 18

*“Bishop Giles’ sermons were very inspirational and encouraging. That was my favorite part!”* Madalyn, 18

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*To listen to the Aim Higher Podcast episode on this retreat as well as His Excellency’s conferences and the retreat highlights, scan this QR code to the Youth Retreat Playlist:*





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# THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME UNCTION

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*Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD*

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The last Sacrament for us as we leave this world is Extreme Unction. This is the anointing with Oleum Infirorum, “Oil of the Sick,” consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday. The Scriptural basis for this Sacrament is found in Saint James (5:14-15): “Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

When Extreme Unction is administered with the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion (In this case called “viaticum”), we refer to this as “Last Rites.” Extreme Unction is one of the “Sacraments of the Living,” which means that we must be in the state of grace to receive it worthily. It is not for those who are in mortal sins. (The Sacraments of the Dead are for those who have mortal sins on their souls. These are Baptism and Penance.) This is why Ex-

treme Unction is often united with the sacrament of Penance or Confession. Once mortal sin has been absolved in the Sacrament of Penance, then the graces of Extreme Unction can be received. Extreme Unction can wash away venial sins but not mortal ones. The graces of Extreme Unction can remove the punishments due to sins that have already been forgiven us and thus, eliminate or reduce our time in Purgatory.

In these last moments of our life here on earth, having received the Sacrament of Penance and Extreme Unction, it is also a most appropriate time to receive Holy Viaticum (Holy Communion) one last time. This ensures that we leave this world not only in the state of grace, cleansed from sin and its punishments, but also spiritually fortified and enriched with the very Presence of Jesus in our bodies and souls, ready to face the spiritual battles that may come our way.

Enriched with all of these graces for our souls, it often

happens that it is God's Will that our physical health is restored and death is delayed for us. Though Extreme Unction is for the dying, it often restores health. This allows us to receive Extreme Unction not just once, but every time we are in imminent danger of death. We do not administer Extreme Unction multiple times for the same illness or danger, but once we recover and are then subsequently returned to danger, then the Sacrament may again be administered.

Extreme Unction is specifically for those in danger of death from illness or accident. It's important to note that a healthy person going into battle, while in danger of death, does not meet the conditions for receiving Extreme Unction. The Sacrament is only administered if the person is mortally shot or wounded, not if they are already deceased. This Sacrament was not often mentioned in the early days of the Church because most Catholics died as martyrs rather than from illness.

It's a common misconception among many Catholics that calling a priest to administer Extreme Unction or Last Rites means they will surely die, as if the Sacrament causes their

death. This is far from the truth. In fact, many people recover their physical health after receiving this Sacrament. Restoring health to our souls frequently restores health to our bodies. This is often the case throughout our lives. When our conscience is clear, then our hearts, minds, and bodies find or recover peace, harmony, and life as well. It's important to dispel these misconceptions and understand the true purpose and benefits of Extreme Unction.

There is a balance that we must seek. Not every little cold or fever is sufficient cause to receive Extreme Unction, but we must not delay calling the priest if there is a serious danger of death.

The Church is very clear that Extreme Unction is a Sacrament. It was instituted by Christ and handed down to us from the Apostles, as we see recorded by Saint James. It has an outward sign – the anointing- and gives grace, as Saint James says: "... shall save the sick man." The matter of this Sacrament is the blessed oil (Oleum Infirmorum); the form is the words of the prayers the priest says when anointing the person; and the intention is to give spiritual grace and aid in

the last struggles as we leave this world. The proper minister for this Sacrament is the priest or bishop, as Saint James clearly states, “Let him bring in the *priests* of the Church...”

Extreme Unction is very necessary for us because the devil never stops trying to lead us away from God. In our last moments of this life, the devil's assault upon our souls increases or intensifies. Our physical hearts, minds, and bodies are weak, and we are very susceptible to their attacks of doubt, depression, and despair. The last moments of our spiritual warfare are the most intense because it is soon

to be over, and either God or the devil will have us for all of eternity. It is for this reason that we are encouraged to pray throughout our lives for the grace of “final perseverance.” Everything can be lost in a moment, so we must strive to never give in to mortal sin nor remain in mortal sin any longer than we have to. We should strive to receive the Sacraments as often and worthily as we possibly can. And ultimately, we should pray not only to persevere to the end, but to be prepared and strengthened with the graces of Extreme Unction and Holy Viaticum.

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# VISIT TO MONSIGNOR GILES

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*Msgr. Luis Alberto Madrigal*

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After receiving the invitation, we eagerly awaited the day we could go there. To board the plane and fly quickly to join our brothers, whom, although not by blood, we were related to in the Catholic faith. We wanted to render a liturgical favor, as it was an anniversary. Finally, the day and hour we were to leave had arrived, and sine mora (without delay) we put one foot in the stirrup, but this time not to get on the horse, but onto the plane.

Time flew by, and suddenly, we all found ourselves dressed in sacred vestments. Each one occupying a place of his own. More than ten people were in the sanctuary. In addition to sharing space and being witnesses, we were also protagonists of the anniversary of that Episcopal consecration. With measured, very solemn movements, we headed to whatever point the celebration called for. To the Epistle side, to the Gospel side, to the center; on the ground floor or at the top of the various steps

that made up the sacred sanctuary. Twelve candles in total, each placed in its candlestick, illuminated the altar. Two golden vases with fresh red flowers, placed one on each side of the tabernacle, also covered with a golden veil, always demanded our attention. That morning, the candle flames flickered constantly as if they too wanted to be faithful witnesses of what was happening there. Because it was late July, the heat and humidity were present. Still, they were greatly mitigated by the air conditioning, whose presence was felt every time it automatically turned on with a soft whisper, making its presence felt.

It was a very different story when we were on our way to this place. When we wanted to board our second flight, we had to run—literally, run—to get on the steel bird.

“My friend, you missed your flight!” said the person still at the counter.

“And now?” our colleague replied.

At that moment, I turned to see the sign announcing the flight, which read “flight closed.” I was sure the plane was there and that they had just closed it, but I figured we should be getting ready to catch another flight.

“Your passports,” said the person in charge of checking in passengers, echoing a woman who was also there. And we presented our five passports.

We had to resign ourselves, and we had no choice but to take advantage of the time to eat, which we so desperately needed.

After this delay, we soon found ourselves at Saint Joseph’s Mission in KY, in the midst of the ceremonies.

Three bell chimes were clearly heard, breaking the solemn silence, or rather inviting those present to kneel before the altar, as the consecration of the Eucharistic species was being prepared. That mid-morning was still running, as the heat outside increased with each minute, accompanied by its inseparable companion, humidity, produced by the

proximity of the Ohio River. The sky was completely cloudless, as the clarity of the light entering through the side windows betrayed it. Our celebrated bishop quickly left his throne, placed next to the Gospel, as prescribed by the rubrics, from where he attended and participated in such divine mysteries. Along with his entourage, upon hearing the bells, it seems that it was the signal for them to head to the center of the altar, and there in the middle, without a skullcap, he knelt on his kneeler, prepared for that moment, and silently waited for events to unfold. Standing before him, facing the altar, was the writer, the celebrating priest, who had already arrived for the prayer: “Qui prídie quam paterétur accépit panem in sanctas ac venábiles manus suas...” (Who the day before He suffered took bread into His holy and venerable hands...) — the moment at which the celebrant rubs the tips of his index finger and thumb on the corporal three times, as he is about to consecrate the species. The faithful attending such an event stared unblinkingly at what was happening before their eyes. The minutes seemed to stand still, not

allowing time to pass. It was also at that moment that the noise of the machine controlling the temperature was silenced. Everyone was attentive to the celebrant's movements, and when the time came, after many preparatory prayers, he bowed and pronounced the words of consecration. He immediately bent his right knee, still holding the Most Holy Sacrament between the fingers of both hands. From the words of consecration, what had once been bread was now, through transubstantiation, the most precious Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, complete in every one of Its parts. Thus, immediately after adoring Him, he presented Him for the adoration of the faithful, raising the Most Precious Victim above his head. The first thing noticed in that gesture was that the successor of the apostles, the one celebrated with his twentieth birthday, that prince of the Church who was outwardly an eremitic, was the first to bow his head and profoundly adore the August Victim. Our Lord Jesus Christ was now present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Without delay, the minor ministers, that is, the acolytes, were attentive to ring

the bell that called those present who might be distracted for any reason, and its sweet and melodious ringing suggested the act of adoration even to the last of the faithful placed at the back of the chapel. Thus it was in the first genuflection, and in the elevation, and in the second genuflection of the first consecration. Everything was repeated with solemnity in the second consecration, without diminishing one iota of devotion. Thus, with this same solemnity, the holy sacrifice of the Mass continued until the *Ite Misa est*, which the deacon sang, followed by the blessing that His Excellency imparted just as he had done for two decades. Once we removed our sacred vestments, an hour and a half of the celebration had passed. The little relaxation on our shoulders was accompanied by the view of a radiant day outside. The mid-morning had thus progressed, and now the human celebration awaited us. After the mysticism, the mastication (eating). Those who attended enjoyed the meal, in addition to the photos, the conversation, and, why not say it, the tequila (made neat) or the agave liqueur (made

from tequila), which made an impression: one diner said when she sipped it: "What a delight!" With this, all the efforts made to attend this event were rewarded. Including the Mexican priest who arrived a day early in the afternoon and left a day later, to assist as a subdeacon (senior minister); the priest (deacon) had also arrived a couple of days early and was leaving about three days later. For us, the whereabouts would be different, as we had to travel to Milwaukee. The day after the ceremony, we were

on our way to visit the faithful at Our Lady of the Rosary Chapel, but this would be the second part, accompanied by the effort made by the person in charge of the consecration ceremony. All this has taken place because your pastor, the spiritual guide, the one in charge of the flock here, is zealous in the fulfillment of his duty.

Congratulations, Monsignor Giles! May you live many years in Our Lord Jesus Christ! Pax et bonum!



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# I AM A ROMAN CATHOLIC: THE LEGACY OF ARCHBISHOP NGO-DINH-THUC

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*Father Anthony Lentz, OFM*

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In the summer of 1999, I went with my two brothers, James and Steve, to Rochester, NY, to visit Mary Queen of the Angels Friary and Chapel. We were to spend the summer with Bishop Louis Vezelis and, the then, Father Giles Butler. My eldest brother, James, made such a visit a few years prior, and he related to me that it was quite an experience. I recall that one of the things he told me I would enjoy was being present for the chanting of the Divine Office. He was correct; attending helped me appreciate the importance of spiritual ambiance while cultivating devotion.

On the day we left for Rochester, I recall attending Mass at Our Lady of the Rosary, which was then located in Milwaukee. We travelled in a big van with two women from the church, Judy Wobick and Mary Hildebrand, and another young boy named Matthew. It was an interesting trip, which involved a few wrong turns and a restaurant experience I would rather

forget. We arrived in Rochester relatively late in the evening, I believe it was after 10 pm. Bishop Louis waited up to greet us and to show us to our rooms. The next morning began with attending Holy Mass and afterwards meeting Father Giles. After we had breakfast, Bishop Louis took time to talk to all of us. One thing he said, in a joking manner but absolutely serious, was that, "For the first three days you are guests, after that you are part of the house." This basically meant that after three days, you have to earn your keep. So, we had to follow the schedule and work. One of the first projects that my brother Steve and I undertook, which we completed over a few weeks, was sifting a massive pile of topsoil. This needed to be done because of the debris that was mixed in with it. I believe this was either donated or sold at a reduced price, which is why there was debris. The reason I am relating this is to set the scene for a significant revelation in my life, although

I did not know it at the time. Those who knew the late Bishop Louis Vezelis know that he could talk a great deal. He never did so to “chew the fat,” but always sought to instruct his listeners, who were usually asking him questions. During one of these conversations in the refectory, he mentioned the name, Archbishop Ngo-Dinh-Thuc. So, like a moderately good, but probably alright, Catholic schoolboy, I raised my hand and asked him, “Who is Archbishop Ngo?” He looked at me with surprise and proceeded to introduce me to this great prelate of the Church. Beyond learning about his existence, I do not remember exactly everything that Bishop Louis said about the Archbishop at that time. I was fortunate to have been given many other opportunities to learn more after joining the minor seminary the following year.

Over twenty-five years have passed since then, and I have learned much more about not only Archbishop Ngo’s background but also, and more importantly, his stance on the state of the Church in our modern times. One of the primary sources of information was his public statement made in Germany

on February 25, 1982. Here is the English translation from the Latin:

*“How does the Catholic Church appear in our days? In Rome, there rules ‘Pope’ John Paul II, assisted by a college of Cardinals, as well as by a large number of Bishops and Prelates. Outside of Rome, the Catholic Church appears to be flourishing with Her Bishops and Priests. Catholics are numerically important. Each day, the Mass is celebrated in many churches, and on the Lord’s Day, the churches welcome many of the faithful to hear Mass and to receive Holy Communion. But, in the eyes of God, how does the Church actually appear? These Masses, daily and Sunday, at which the faithful assist, are they not pleasing to God? In no way, because this Mass is the same for Catholics and Protestants. For this reason, it is not pleasing to God and is INVALID. The only Mass pleasing to God is the Mass of Saint Pius V, which is celebrated by a small number of priests and bishops, of which I make up a part. For this reason, and in the measure possible, I will open a seminary for candidates to a priesthood pleasing to God. Over and above this ‘Mass’*

*which offends God, there are several elements that constitute an object of reproach to God. For example, in priestly ordination, in episcopal consecration, in the Sacraments of Confirmation and Extreme Unction. Besides these things, these “priests” mentioned above profess: 1. Modernism 2. A false ecumenism 3. The Cult of Man 4. Religious indifference 5. The refusal to condemn and excommunicate heretics. For these reasons, in my capacity as a Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, I judge that the Apostolic See of the Church is vacant, and that it is my duty as a Bishop to do all in my power to assure the continuation of the Roman Catholic Church for the eternal salvation of souls. “*

*Munich, 25 February 1982 +  
Peter-Martin Ngo-Dinh-Thuc  
ARCHBISHOP*

One of my goals with this series of articles is to elaborate on the numerous issues that Bishop Ngo addressed here. I am not the first person from our community to have done this. Bishop Vezelis, in particular, had written extensively about these issues in The Seraph and The Roman Catholic Quarterly for many years. I will be using much of his work as a reference.

One of my other goals is to provide fellow Catholics with a quick and simple reference that helps them understand and explain our position. This is important because, in this time of religious confusion, we must have a clear understanding of Church teaching to properly form a true conviction. I will be following the popular “question and answer” method. Our long-time readers may remember that The Seraph had such a series for many years called “What was the Question?”

Here is the first “question and answer,” and it is a very important one to be able to answer clearly and distinctly:

**Q: You travel many miles to attend a Latin Mass, instead of going to your local parish. Are you even a Catholic? If so, what kind of Catholic are you?**

**A: I am a Roman Catholic who believes all the Catholic Church believes and teaches since the time of Christ and His Apostles. I believe all the doctrines and dogmas that have been defined and declared by all legitimate popes and councils, especially those by the Council of Trent. It was through the work of this Council that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was later codified by Pope St. Pius**

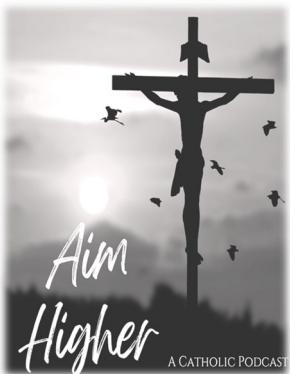
*V with the Papal Bull Quo Primum. I hold to all the traditions and teachings of the Church, as regards her discipline. Due to these established teachings, I believe that the last true pope was Pope Pius XII. Since his death, modernists have infected the Church with their false teachings and have taken over the Apostolic See. This means that all of the subsequent 'popes' are anti-popes, and that the Seat of St.*

*Peter is, in actuality, vacant. This Novus Ordo church has fallen into heresy. Its New Mass is invalid, and also their sacraments are invalid or at the very least doubtful.*

As you can see, this answer has produced many other questions. The next question we will address in the following article is, “What is modernism?”



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# GOD'S CREATION: THE BODY

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*Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD*

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We are unique beings among all of God's creation because we have both bodies and souls. Very often in the spiritual life, we see our bodies as obstacles, burdens, and even enemies to our souls. We must frequently remind ourselves that all that God has made is good. Our bodies are good. Our bodies are not our enemies.

Our souls give life to our bodies, and our bodies provide the physical means for our souls to interact with the physical world that God has created. Our bodies and souls are mutually necessary for us – they must complement and aid one another. To think that physical creation and, therefore, our bodies are evil is wrong and even sinful. To live without regard to or in discord with our souls is irrational and evil. We are not angels (without physical bodies) nor are we animals (without immortal souls). We must, somehow, develop or cultivate both body and soul so that we may obtain eternal glory with God in Heaven.

We are not independent beings. We are interconnected physically and spiritually with God and His other creatures. Our physical bodies necessarily interact with other people and with the physical world that God has given us. Our souls necessarily interact with other spiritual beings: angels, both good and fallen ones, and with other humans.

With every action, there is a reaction. There are necessary or logical consequences that happen naturally and sometimes supernaturally to all that we do (thoughts, words, actions, and omissions).

Natural sciences are often correct about what is observed. Still, they often misidentify true causes and effects, simply because many refuse to acknowledge or account for the spiritual side of our beings.

In the spiritual realm, many correct observations are made. Still, many mistakes are also made in identifying true causes and effects, simply because many refuse to acknowledge

or account for the physical or animal side of our being.

Physical pain is often labeled as evil or as a punishment for some evil. While this may sometimes be true, it is not necessarily so. Sometimes pain or discomfort is simply the logical or necessary effect of some action. If I touch a very hot object, I will feel a burning pain. We may see this pain as a punishment for my sins. We may see this pain as a reminder or a lesson to be more careful around hot objects. Or, we can conclude that this pain is simply the natural and logical consequence of having touched a hot object. My intentions at the time may help me discern this matter. If I touched the object in disobedience or rebellion, then I have sinned in touching the hot object, and the subsequent pain may be seen as a punishment for my sin. If I touched the hot object accidentally or unintentionally, then the ensuing pain is not a punishment but merely a natural or logical consequence.

Spiritually, even the pain caused by an accidental action may be embraced as a punishment for other sins we may be guilty of. In this way, we can spiritualize and turn this indifferent pain or

suffering into an acceptable offering to God. This is then a form of reparation for our sins or the sins of others. It can become a way for us to unite with Jesus' sufferings, sacrifice, and offering.

If there was sin in our actions that caused us pain, we should also embrace this and turn it into an acceptable reparation and offering to God. Our pain reminds us of our physical bodies but often blinds us to our immortal souls. Very often, we observe in ourselves and others that physical pain brings forth a host of evil emotions, frequently followed by evil thoughts, words, and actions. The pain of a burn often brings forth crude or foul language, curses, and even blasphemies. We immediately conclude it is a punishment from God and begin questioning Him: "What did I do to deserve this?" and we often answer this ourselves with: "I did not do anything to deserve this!" The blasphemous implication of this is that God is unjust, evil, or mean for doing this to me.

Consequences are not necessarily punishments. Pain is good. It is necessary to protect us. We remove our hands from hot objects very quickly because of pain. If we could not feel

this pain, we would hold on to hot objects for too long and cause much greater damage to our bodies.

Besides these physical pains, there are emotional and logical pains that we experience in this life. These often border between body and soul. We sometimes witness these breaking out not only in evil thoughts and words, but also in physical damage – throwing things, hitting things, breaking things. Sometimes, even in assaulting innocent bystanders. This would be very comical to observe if it were not for the fact of how intensely evil it is. The willful destruction or even attempted destruction of the gifts of God is a great evil.

I once observed a construction worker on a rooftop in a fit of anger, cursing and throwing his hammer out into the woods. It was very comical because it was not only illogical, but now someone had to go out and find that hammer so that he could continue working. The problem was not lessened by the crude language or by throwing the hammer. The problem would only be resolved after calmness, reason, and logic were restored.

When children act out, they are admonished and told to stop acting so childishly. Very few adults are called out when they are in their “moods” because they will not hear or listen to reason. Their actions are even more blameworthy because they are not children – they are in adult bodies but are acting not as children but as irrational animals or even worse – demons.

While many of our “moods” may be attributable to the things happening around us, sometimes they are caused by some physical thing within us that we don’t see, understand, or even appreciate in the moment. Not every inappropriate “mood” has a supernatural cause. Our physical bodies are very complex, and many things operate without our conscious awareness of them. The diabetic whose glucose levels become elevated often is easily agitated, annoyed, frustrated, and even angered, and in the moment, they don’t even know what is happening. Whenever our hormones or internal systems are not in balance, we feel the pain or experience wild emotions, and it sometimes comes out in ways that are irrational and unbecoming of any Christian. These internal but physical

pains are just as real as the visible pain of a burn on our hands. These physical pains, whether internal or external, do not justify any evil thoughts, words, or actions.

When we feel pain, we should strive to identify, remove, or correct the cause, if we are able. If the pain is a burn on our hand, we immediately withdraw our hand from the hot object. If the cause is an internal imbalance in our bodies, we examine our health, our diets, our exercise, and other lifestyle factors, and we seek ways to correct these. These are not curses or punishments from God but instead natural and logical consequences of the current situation. These physical pains can, if we let them, cause spiritual suffering. These often manifest as what we see today as psychological problems, such as anxiety, depression, and despair.

There is also the spiritual side with its hosts of pains, and these too can bleed over into the physical realm. A guilty conscience can cause indigestion, upset stomach, hypertension, etc.

Not all our physical ailments have spiritual or supernatural causes – they are not necessarily curses or punish-

ments from God. And not all our spiritual ailments have physical or natural causes. They sometimes are temptations or trials and tribulations provoked by supernatural beings. However, sometimes the physical is attributable to the spiritual, and sometimes the spiritual is attributable to the physical.

Whatever the pain or discomfort, wherever it originates, within or without – physically or spiritually, we need to strive to be calm and embrace this cross patiently and willingly for the love of God, in reparation for our sins or the sins of others, and even for the relief of the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory. Under no circumstances should we allow any pain to cause us to harm ourselves or our neighbors, either physically, emotionally, or spiritually. We must first strive to truly love and respect ourselves, both body and soul, so that we can then truly love and respect our neighbors.



# 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?*

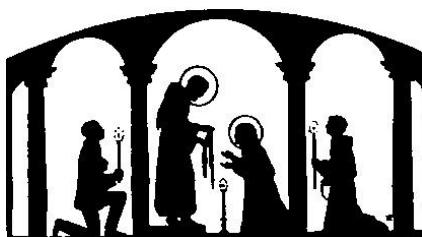
*Do you find yourself increasingly unsatisfied by the life of the world?*

*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.*



# VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

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*Very Reverend Lyman A. Fenn, S.S., D.D.*

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## CHAPTER THREE

### MEANS OF FOSTERING VOCATIONS

In this chapter there remains the task of indicating ways of fostering vocations, that is, means of arousing interest in the priesthood, of helping a boy come to a decision about his vocation, and of advising him to enter the seminary. We shall first try to mark out clearly the position of those who use the means. Next we shall consider some types of candidates with whom we have to deal, as their varying reactions will largely determine the way we choose to approach them. And thirdly, we shall treat of the chief means of fostering vocations.

#### I. THE POSITION OF THOSE WHO FOSTER VOCATIONS

“Behold the Lamb of God.” These directive words of John the Baptist, as was pointed out in the first chapter, are big with meaning for us. The humble Precursor directed two of his disciples to Our Lord, but he did nothing more than direct. He merely bore witness to Our Savior, as though saying to the men who were with him: “There is the Fountain Head of all true vocations. Go to Him!”

The next step was left to the disciples themselves. Christ intruded on no man, for He respected the dignity of human freedom, which He Himself had created. He issued an invitation, and then waited for a response. He would have willing faith only, spontaneous allegiance. But once that faith was given, then the more graciousness, the more intimacy, the more love He bestowed, thus drawing by affection, not forcing by any moral persuasion.

The present-day John the Baptists, priests and teachers, bear witness to Christ. Theirs it is to direct the boy to Our Lord as to the One who issues the real invitation to “come, follow Him.”

Theirs is not, therefore, to urge the boy to enter the seminary by that constant encouragement which amounts to moral force. No good can come from pressure thus exerted. Under its influence the boy without any vocation may try the seminary for a time, until with a growing sense of responsibility he wakes up to the fact that his entering never was his own personal idea. On the other hand, a boy whom God has destined for the priesthood may fight against the desire precisely because there is so much urging that he cannot be sure whether

the desire is his own or that of an overzealous adviser. Boys have been known to put off entering the seminary for four years or even longer, because they were bewildered by too much advice or because they resented what seemed undue interference in so personal a concern.

The grace of a vocation to the priesthood is given to the one called and to no other. As a result he himself must correspond with it and all its attendant divine helps. Like the Apostles, he must answer the call personally. As we know, the desire for the priesthood comes into being under God's grace and waxes strong by many contacts with the Person of Christ in prayer, in the Confessional, in Holy Communion, in visits to the Blessed Sacrament. What a wise adviser will do, then, is to get and keep the desirable candidate in touch with Our Lord in as many ways as possible.

#### **VARIOUS TYPES OF CANDIDATES**

It is commonplace to remark that each likely boy presents a problem in himself and that no two can be approached on the question of a vocation in exactly the same manner. Let us take some of the typical cases we meet with among the youngsters of an American parish. There is first of all the boy who is not reluctant to disclose his desire to be a priest to responsible persons. The wish has teased him from early boyhood, perhaps since the day of his first Holy Communion. He has never

wanted to be anything else. His mother knows of his ambition, is secretly overjoyed, but tries to hide her gladness for fear of influencing her son in a decision which she insists must be his own. His teacher and all who have to do with his training take it almost for granted that he will enter the seminary when he is old enough. The only problem presented by such a boy is to ascertain that his hopes are not built upon a pious illusion, but are well founded upon the proper qualifications of body, mind, and spirit. His longing will easily be kept alive by the ways to be presently suggested.

There are many splendid boys, however, who shrink from laying bare their secret ambitions to any one. Sacred and timid hopes may often be in their hearts, but not often on their lips. They have at their tender age already acquired the American aversion for wearing one's heart on the sleeve, and while they in their innermost souls have been dreaming of one day wearing the sacred vestments, how shame-faced they would be if ever one of their companions discovered this secret. Then they would be branded as "pious," the "minister's son" of Protestantism, and that would mean breaking with the common run of boys. In public, in the classroom of all places, what squirming chagrin would be theirs, if ever they were singled out as among those who were "going to be priests"!

An imagined lack of talent may sometimes be responsible for the humble boy's unwillingness to unburden himself of the secret that is close-locked within his breast. His past report cards are not landmarks of triumphs in his studies. He never did take first prize in any subject, and he entertains an abiding fear that he would "never make the grade" in the seminary.

Or his reticence is much more frequently due to that exalted idea of the priestly state, which he has inherited as part of his Catholic birthright and in the light of which his own small faults and shortcomings loom large. He is not "good enough" to be a priest; he dare not cast his lot and hope upon so high a destiny. And thus the very quality which is so charming and which presents so much priestly promise — a Catholic boy's humility — seals his lips and makes him loathe to tell his secret.

Again he may be reluctant to speak of his hidden longings, because of a refined sense of responsibility to his parents. There may be many children. Dad doesn't make much money, and Mother is always trying to find ways to save. Not realizing that it is chiefly from homes like his own that the Church recruits her clergy, not knowing that financial difficulties can always be ironed out when a boy is really worthy, he guards his secret with the fear that the expenses of the long seminary

training put the priesthood beyond his reach.

These sturdy little chaps with such fine priestly potentialities may pass out of the primary grades into high school and eventually out into the world without ever disclosing their youthful dreams. With wistful regret they may put aside their boyhood ambitions and thus would that germ of vocation, which should have matured in the seminary, meet the same sad fate as that of the good seed which fell among thorns. "The Lamb of God," the Maker of priests, would pass by, not unnoticed but unreached. A few words of encouragement from us, priests or teachers, what would they not have done for them!

These boyish difficulties we must bear in mind in planning our approaches. We must somehow break through the barrier of shyness; we must put into words the chief perplexities that, harassing the heart of a boy, may keep him mute. But any method we use must be employed with great discretion and prudence, else we may tamper with the youth's freedom by over-insistence, betray his secret by divulging our own hopes for him or get ourselves into embarrassing situations by strongly encouraging boys, only to discover later that there is present some disqualifying trait or some insoluble family difficulty.

# PRO PARENTIBUS

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*Father Joseph Noonan, OFM*

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It is clearly understood that the life of parents is filled with responsibility. The two main areas of responsibility are spiritual and temporal. The temporal responsibilities are clear to most parents, i.e., food, clothing, shelter, and education.

The spiritual duties and responsibilities have proven to be a significant stumbling block for most parents. Today, this even includes Catholic parents. Serious parents understand the necessity of an academic Catholic education. This is the formal education in the catechism and religion texts for Catholic students from elementary school through high school years.

The most notable failure of parents involves their spiritual life or prayer life, as most would view it. It was once assumed that Catholic children learned the most basic prayers before they received their First Holy Communion. In the years that followed, through high school, several other prayers were taught and hopefully learned.

It is here that the neglect surfaces. It is one thing to teach children to *memorize* prayers, but quite another to have them *develop a love for prayer*. Is one able to effectively teach children to love praying? One may be able to vocalize in a catechism lesson, but will this encouragement be enough? It isn't very certain. What, then, is necessary?

Experience in the spiritual life provides a parent with the answer to this all-important question. Parents must love to pray and set a good example for their children. A parent's love of prayer cannot effectively begin with the birth of the first child. When parents make this mistake, they minimize the need for prayer.

Ideally, a Catholic parent will grow up loving to pray. This, sadly, is not a common occurrence. One would hope that when the dating years begin, both men and women would pray to find a good Catholic spouse. How many men or women pray with those they are dating? If you pray

regularly, you will quickly find out if the person you are dating is the one you wish to marry.

This approach to marriage will provide you with many answers as to who you are dating. Is this person willing to pray with you? Is he simply doing it to please you, only to stop praying after you marry?

How many couples pray together as the wedding approaches? Catholic couples are required to go to Confession a day or two before marrying. How many considered praying a Rosary together after confessing their sins, or was the “priority” a dinner the night before? Weddings are filled with distractions, but how many maintain a proper focus on the sacramental reality before them? One learns much about couples when one observes their “priorities” in these situations.

How many couples make it a priority from their wedding day to pray together each day? How many couples think little or not at all about their need to pray after having vowed to God to live as husband and wife “until death do they part?”

One may attempt to fake holiness or genuine spirituality, but unless one is undergoing an authentic conversion, it won’t last long. The truth is that the heart and the soul must be spiritually joined if you desire to love to pray and pray to love.

Many have succeeded in achieving a worthy spirituality in marriage. One cannot be satisfied with mediocrity or the status quo and expect to raise one’s children to go to Heaven.

This raises a fundamental Catholic question when raising children. Are you more concerned with their temporal welfare or their eternal salvation? Far too many parents believe they have fulfilled their duty as Catholic parents by sending their children to Catholic schools. What is the home life like?

Are you, as a Catholic parent, spending time each day praying together as a family? Are you spending time alone or with your spouse, praying for your marriage and family? Are you giving a good example to your children by receiving the Sacraments regularly? Regularly here means at least once or twice a month. Children will follow the example of their parents

regardless of their words. Too often, children will follow the example of the “weaker link.” Parents need to be fully aware of this and do all they can to overcome being a “weak link.”

*Speaking plainly, if the family does not pray together and the parents do not receive the Sacraments regularly, the children will likely be poor Catholics and may leave the Church entirely. Do not expect your children to be better than you if you are giving a poor or bad example as a Catholic parent. A good example is everything when it comes to raising children.*

Parents are reminded here of their vocation and the graces which are available from having received the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony. These graces are present once you have taken the sacred vows until your death or that of your spouse.

Prayer ought to be at the center of Catholic Life. It should come easily and often. Many are familiar with the example of how one needs to eat daily to nourish the body. If you do not eat, the body will be harmed and eventually die. The same may be said of the soul. One needs to nourish the soul each day, as well. The

two primary sources of grace are the Sacraments and prayer. Since the Sacraments are not usually received daily, prayer must be the principal means of spiritual nourishment.

Spiritual Communions are truly priceless, considering one may make these numerous times each day. One should not underestimate the graces and spiritual value of these intimate spiritual moments with Our Lord. Depending upon the person and his disposition, one may receive as many graces, if not more, than one who receives sacramentally but whose disposition is less than ideal.

God requires much from parents. This is understandable, considering the significant influence parents will have on their children and, consequently, on the world. To determine how well or poorly children have been raised, observe them. They are a reflection of the parents. There are exceptions, but generally this is a trustworthy principle.

Parents are encouraged to establish a Catholic environment in their homes. A Catholic home ought to be a place of prayer and peace. If this means that many changes

must be made, then do not hesitate to implement them quickly. The devil will do everything possible to discourage you. Have the humility to admit the mistakes one has made.

If your family has been praying together, you should be commended for fulfilling this critical responsibility. You must now continue to lead the family in prayer each day. Please be aware that the devil will create “distractions” which seem real but are not. Learn to recognize those things that are nothing more than empty distractions or poor excuses for not praying.

Spiritual priorities are most important in family life. The salvation of each family member is at stake. As parents, you must properly understand that God has given you children for a short time. It is up to you to make the most of this time. Set aside a portion of each day for reflection and prayer, for yourself, your spouse, and your children. Do not be afraid to live in a Catholic home where each member is committed to their own salvation.

Pray each day to the Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph for intercession and guidance!

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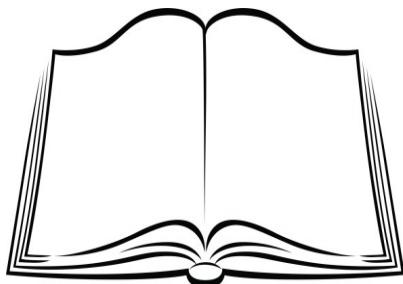
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# *The Catholic Mother to Her Children*

*The Countess de Flavigny*



## **TWENTY-SECOND LESSON**

### **THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

Suppose a man to have a hundred sheep, of which he takes great care. One of them is lost; it has gone astray into the wilderness, and is in danger of being torn by the wolf, or falling down a precipice. Does he not leave the ninety-nine other sheep, and go after that one? When he has found it, does he not take it on his shoulders, and bring it home joyfully? Does he not call his neighbors to rejoice with him that the strayed sheep has been brought back safe? Now, such is the persuasive parable by which Our Blessed Lord shows us His love for a penitent sinner. This is a lesson which the Church sets before us in the Gospel. In another place, Our Lord draws out this lesson more fully, as you may read in the tenth

chapter of St. John's Gospel. He there calls Himself the Good Shepherd; and He proves His title by saying that He is even come to give His life for the sheep He loves so much. For Our Lord did more for us than bring us home on His shoulders. On those Divine shoulders, He bore for us the heavy Cross, along "the Way of the Cross," and up the weary hill of Calvary.

Hear how an ancient hymn addressed Him, regarding His saving Passion:

*Beneath Thy Cross' weight  
fordone, stunned by Thy foes'  
malignant cries, true Isaac,  
Thou, the Victim Son, dost  
mount the pyre of Sacrifice.*

This was indeed, the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep. What unthankful-

ness for such a sacrifice, when they insist on breaking away from the fold, and straying back to the wilderness! They richly deserve to fall into the jaws of the wolf.

This parable of the Good Shepherd made a deep impression on the early Christians who were under persecution, while Rome was still a heathen city; when they had to burrow underground to save their lives. They lived, for days and weeks together, in subterranean passages, and heard Mass and received Communion in dark and close subterranean chapels: as wretched as could be, but consoled by the glorious hopes that belong to sufferers for Christ. To keep before their very eyes the tender love of the Good Shepherd, Who had brought them out of their heathen sins to the knowledge and love of Himself, they painted this image on the rocky walls of their living tomb. Nay, more. To show there was no sin so great that He would not pardon on sincere repentance and worthy fruits of penance, they painted Him sometimes as carrying a *goat*, not a sheep, on His shoulders. A goat! That is a sinner who would have found himself on the left hand of the Judge at the last day, unless

the Lord Himself, the future Judge, had come to save him, and had given him grace to repent, and so to escape the judgment in store for impenitent souls.

How earnestly we should see to it, that we are true penitents, bringing forth worthy fruits of penance; blotting out past sins with tears of true contrition; “washing our robes, and making them white in the Blood of the Lamb.” That Sacred Blood of the Good Shepherd, as we know well, is poured over us in the Sacrament of Penance. However foul the soul may be, and deeply stained with sin, when the poor sinner goes into the confessional, yet let him only give a plain account of those sins, with a sincere desire that the priest should understand him, and with a determination to break them off, and break off the occasions that have led to them – he will find the Good Shepherd waiting for him in that confessional. The penitent may be more like a goat than a sheep; nay, he may have been more like a wolf or a swine than either. That is not the question; the question is this: Is he a humble penitent? Has he done his best to make a real act of contrite sorrow? Is he going to make it over again, while the Good Shepherd

gives him absolution? Has he striven to place before his conscience the great evil of sin, its dreadful punishment and doom, its ingratitude against the love of God and His goodness? Will he leave it, and watch against it, for these motives? Then the Good Shepherd is waiting for him in the confessional. He will bring him home on His shoulders; home from the wilderness into which he has strayed, safe home from that cruel wolf, the devil, who opened his jaws for him; home to His own fold, where saints and angels are waiting to receive him, and rejoice over him.

And now, if you follow that pardoned sinner out of the confessional to the altar-rails,

and from thence to his home, to his family and his employments, surely you will see a changed man. You will see a man who is now as anxious to do good to others as he may have done harm to their souls. His words, his acts, his whole example, will show a carefulness, a sense that Our Lord expects something from him, and has not pardoned him for nought. The word of Christ to those He forgives, is this: “Go, and now sin no more.” “Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee.” “Go into thy house to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy on thee.”

“GO TO YOUR CONFESSOR; OPEN YOUR  
HEART TO HIM; DISPLAY TO HIM ALL THE  
RECESSES OF YOUR SOUL.”

~*St. Thomas Aquinas*



# FRANCISCAN SAINTS

OCTOBER 2ND

**Blessed Nicholas  
of Furca Palena**

*Confessor, Third Order*

Nicholas spent the days of his youth in the practice of prayer and penance. After he had entered the Third Order and had become a priest, he labored for a time in his native city in a most exemplary way. Then he finally yielded to the strong attraction he felt for a life of solitude, and with several companions who were similarly disposed he repaired to a hermitage, first in Rome, then in Naples, and then again in Rome.

When Pope Eugene IV heard of his sanctity, he entrusted to him the direction of several convents in Florence. But in time, Nicholas again returned to Rome, where he founded a convent and a church on the Janiculum in honor of St. Onuphrius. Almighty God distinguished His faithful servant with signs and wonders.

When Nicholas was one hundred years old, he was admitted to the vision of God. This was in 1440. Pope Clement IV approved the devotion accorded him. His feast is observed on October second.

## OUR GOAL IN LIFE

1.) Our goal is the grave and eternity. Nicholas had this truth ever before his mind. That is why he left the world, so that in the quiet of seclusion he could prepare for a glorious resurrection from the grave and a blessed eternity. He knew that “the world passes away and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God abides forever.” (*1 John 2:17*) There were such that shook their heads at the life he led, nevertheless he had actually chosen the better part. Let us frequently think of our goal in life.

2.) Our goal is a twofold eternity. It will be either an eternity of blissful joy or an eternity of pain and torment. We decide our own eternity. “What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.” (*Gal. 6:8*) Every man is the author of his own fortune or misfortune. It was, therefore, holy wisdom on the part of Blessed Nicholas to direct his entire attention to achieving a blessed eternity. Is that the case with you?

3.) We may arrive at our goal quite suddenly, even this very day. “You know not the day

nor the hour.” (*Matthew 25:13*) It would be a terrible thing for us to find ourselves suddenly at our goal without being prepared for it. In that case the words of Holy Scripture could be applied to us: “They spend their day in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell.” (*John 21:13*) Prepare yourself in time.



### **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

O LORD, WHO DOST POINT OUT TO THE WAYWARD THE LIGHT OF THY TRUTH, SO THAT THEY MAY RETURN TO THE PATH OF JUSTICE, GIVE TO ALL CONFESSORS OF THY NAME THE GRACE TO DESPISE WHATEVER IS DISPLEASING TO THIS NAME, AND TO STRIVE AFTER THOSE THINGS THAT ARE AGREEABLE TO IT.  
THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

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