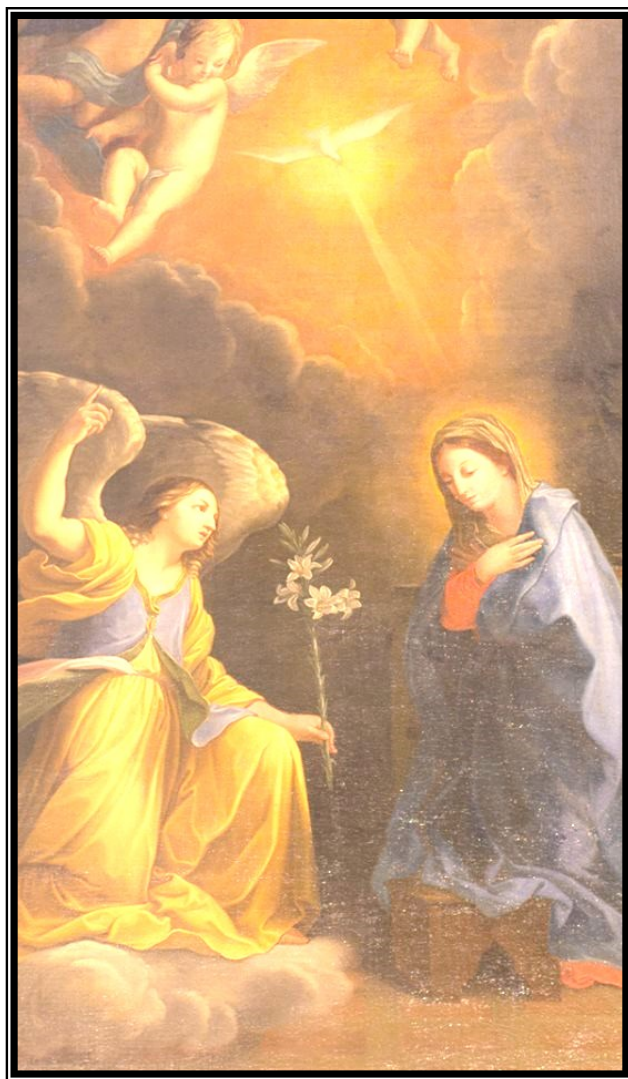


THE SERAPH

March 2019

Vol. XXXIX No. 7



The Annunciation

The Seraph

Vol. XXXIX No. 7
MARCH 2019

PUBLISHED WITH EPISCOPAL AUTHORIZATION

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

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

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

USA: Free upon request.

Suggested donation - \$20.00.

FOREIGN: Air Mail - \$40.00 per year.

ALL CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE SENT TO :

The SERAPH

3376 MOUNT READ BLVD.

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14616

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Publishers:

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

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THE SERAPH

THE NECESSITY OF CHANGE

Bishop Giles, OFM

This life is one of constant change. We must willingly or unwillingly let go of the past and move forward into the future. It is a frightening thing to let go of what was comfortable and somewhat secure to advance into a realm that is unknown and fraught with dangers.

Infants are coaxed, encouraged, and even bribed to get them to take their first steps in walking. After all, it is much easier to have someone carry them around and bring things to them. However, once they taste the relative freedom that comes with self-ambulation, they never want to return to the inability to walk.

Often, we find adult children still seeking to be cared for by their parents – even when it is high time that the children should be caring for their parents instead. Strangely enough, there are even parents that do not want to let go of their children. We see children afraid to grow up and parents refusing to let or help their children to grow up.

I once read about the training of falcons. The author of the book stated that the falconer prevents the falcon from ever reaching maturity. The falcon is always kept dependent upon the falconer for all its needs. It is never allowed to eat what it captures but is only allowed to eat what its master gives it. Hence, there are full grown birds that still cry and beg as nestlings that cannot help themselves. They are capable of hunting and providing for themselves, but they are not permitted to do so. They have exchanged the freedom and fullness of maturity for the security of being kept and fed. In nature, the bird's parents will push the birds out of the nest, teach them to hunt and then drive them away or leave them behind, thus forcing them to mature and reach their full potential. Yes, there are probably some that die and are unable to make it, but it is better for the falcon species that all the young develop into successful independent adults or die. The falcon parents cannot afford to care for adult offspring the way that a falconer can.

Many will read this and conclude that this aspect of nature is cruel, and others will see the efforts of men training these animals as cruel because they are not permitted to reach full and natural maturity. It seems that nature is much kinder in forcing the change of maturity than man is in halting the maturation process for his own ends. What appears hard and unpleasant in the natural order, is actually the kindest thing to be done. The mother bird pushing the babies out of the nest is doing the best thing for the babies and this best thing is also the kindest thing she can do.

Change is a natural and necessary part of our lives here on earth. To truly be happy, we need to reach our full potential and our full potential demands that we advance from stage to stage – physically, mentally, emotionally – and most importantly – spiritually. We strive to give our children the proper environment (food, shelter, and clothing) as well as the proper education (we teach them to speak, walk, and many other simple tasks. We generally follow this with a formal education of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Most

mothers are very concerned whether their children are reaching the accepted stages of development on time. Every mile marker is celebrated as entering into a new stage. It is, however, also the leaving behind of the previous stage. The previous stage has been mastered, and we are comfortable in it, as well as proficient in it – we have a feeling of security here. To advance, we must sacrifice the security to step out into new territory.

What happens in the material realm of our lives, also takes place in the spiritual realm. Our Holy Mother the Church offers us the Sacraments in every stage of our lives to advance us from one spiritual stage to the next. St. Paul would have us understand that we much change. We must put off the old man and put on the new (*Ephesians 4:22-24*). He reminds us that when we were children we acted like children, but this action is not appropriate to grown men. Grown men put away childish things (*1Corinthians 13:11*). In the life of our souls, we are taken stage by stage from the material realm into the spiritual realm.

Infants are generally quite materialistic – their wants/needs are simple physical things (food, warmth, comfort, love). As they advance in childhood their materialistic wants increase proportionally (more expensive toys, games, and pleasures) – this is the life of a child that knows nothing else. It is the duty of parents to speak of and teach the children of their souls. They must help them to understand that their souls are even more important than their bodies – that the pleasures of the soul are better and greater than the pleasures of the body. We should always strive for the happiness of our souls even if it demands a sacrifice of our bodies. This is not an easy thing to teach and as with most other things, it is easiest and best to teach by example. Gradually, through perseverance, we seek to arrive at a higher spiritual life in our children – we are developing the life of Jesus Christ within them.

Ultimately, we will all die to this physical life and enter into a spiritual one. We have no choice in this. It is a decree of God written in the natural law. “For dust thou art and unto dust

thou shall return.” (*Genesis 3: 19*)

Those who live out their physical lives without preparing their spiritual ones lose everything. They lose their physical lives, and their undeveloped, stunted, malformed souls are forever deprived of God – Who is their very life and happiness. What a tragic waste to lose both body and soul in the total deprivation of God, our only true peace and happiness.

The wise person strives to live out his physical life in ever increasing preparation for his spiritual life. He is gradually dying in this physical body as everyone is, but he welcomes these mile markers – grateful to leave the past behind and reach forward to better and greater things. The loss of physical hearing, physical sight, and physical mobility are all accepted as necessary in dying to this world and this life. There is sadness and uncertainty in the loss of these functions, but there should be resignation to the Will of God, and even joy in the burdens the loss of functions affords us.

The spiritual man rejoices in the opportunities to suffer and die in the physical life. This is the only path in following Jesus Christ. When we willingly deny our physical selves, take up our daily crosses and follow Jesus; we find true rest, comfort, peace, and happiness in our souls. The Apostles rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for the Name of Jesus (*Acts 5:41*).

Through discipline and denial of the wants of our bodies, we strengthen and build up the life of our souls. As we die to ourselves, we allow the life of Jesus to develop within us. Our goal should be to be able to say with St. Paul: “It is no

longer I, but Christ Jesus living within me” (*Galatians 2:20*).

The less attached we are to this life, the more we are able to attach ourselves to our future (eternal) life. The “Peace prayer of St. Francis” suggests to us that: “It is in dying that we are born into eternal life.” May we welcome the penitential seasons as ever-increasing opportunities to let go of the past. No matter how comfortable and secure the past seems to be, our true freedom and happiness is only to be found in making the leap of faith - leaving our spiritual immaturity behind to draw ever closer to full spiritual maturity of Life in Christ.

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LESSONS FROM OUR CRUCIFIXES

Bishop Giles, OFM

Our Crucifixes and The Way of the Cross are endless treasure troves of spiritual wisdom and understanding. Sadly, as with most devotions, The Way of the Cross often degenerates into the monotony of rote recitation or “prayer.” Let us rise from this spiritual lethargy by considering that the great theologians: St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, etc. tell us that their wisdom and understanding (I dare add, their sanctity.) came to them through meditation upon Christ crucified.

On the surface of such meditation, we find the endless Love of God for us – God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to suffer and die upon the cross for us (*St. John 3:16*). Next, we find a glimpse of the true evil of sin. It is our sins that nailed Jesus to the cross. These beautiful and profound ideas are enough to make the truly loving soul overflow with sentiments of love, praise, thanksgiving, repentance, etc.

We have encouraged everyone to not only have a crucifix prominently and beautifully

displayed in their homes but also, to have a handheld crucifix for prayer or meditation. It is a beautiful practice to have children hold a crucifix when in “time out.” In this way, the discipline imposed upon them may become an instructive correction, rather than simply a deterrent punishment. Adults can lead the way by even joining them in time out and holding a crucifix of their own. Together they can talk about and think about the evils of sin, but also of the love of God for us.

Sometimes when we cannot find the words or strength to pray our regular prayers, it is useful just to hold our crucifix. There is so much more that we can say and hear in the quiet of our souls without ever uttering or thinking a single word. Love does not always need words. What Jesus sees in our eyes or in our hearts is better than anything from our lips.

From the sequence of events that followed the crucifixion of Jesus, our meditations move toward the glories of the

Resurrection and the promise of the resurrection of our own bodies on the Last Day. From the crucifix, we can consider all that led up to this time as we consider the Mysteries of the Way of the Cross. The Crucifix is the center or point of origin for this world as well as for our own lives. History is counted as the time before the coming of Jesus Christ, as well as the current time of Christ's presence with us here in the Holy Catholic Church – His Bride – His Mystical Body. Our lives are divided into the time before we receive Him and the time when He lives within us.

In the life of Jesus, we see that He came to do the Will of His Father – offer Himself in sacrifice for us so that we may become one with God in Heaven. Jesus is showing us the way if we will only hear Him and follow Him. He invites us to make a sacrifice by denying ourselves and taking up a daily cross and thus follow Him.

A sacrifice is the destruction of some good thing as an offering to God. We are not called upon to destroy that which is bad or of inferior quality. God wants us to offer the best to Him

hence we offer the “first fruits” and the unblemished offering. In these offerings, we are only returning to God what He has given us. All that is good has come to us from Him. The most precious gift that we have from God is our free will. This was the life-long sacrifice that Jesus offered to His Father in Heaven. He came not to do His Own Will but the Will of His Father. We see this most perfectly expressed in the Garden of Olives the night before He died. “Not My Will, but Thine be done.”

The self-denial that Jesus invites us to embrace as we follow Him, is the perfect sacrifice of our own free wills as we seek only God's Will. In the Lord's Prayer, we say: “Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” When we make the sacrifice of our wills for His, we live out this very prayer. We offer to God the best that we have – the most precious thing we possess – our free wills.

St. Frances of Rome was promised by her father in marriage when she desired to become a religious. Overcome with tears of sorrow, she appeared before her confessor for his help. He answered this

young girl with the simple question: "Are you crying because you want to do God's Will or because you want to do your own?" She accepted the sacrifice of her own will and entered into holy marriage. She was blessed by God in this state and was later permitted to become a religious after the death of her husband. Too often, it appears, we are eager for what we want rather than for what God wants. To our shame we discover, many times over, that what we think we want is not really what we want at all. So often we obtain the object of our desires only to discover that it does not satisfy us as we thought it would. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee my God" (St. Augustine).

Our goal in the sacrifice of our wills to God's Will should be like that of Mary the Mother of God: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy Word." Or when hardships are pressed upon us against our own wills to answer with Job from the Old Testament: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord."

While this self-denial is truly a sacrifice, I have often considered that God does not desire the destruction of what He has made that is good so that it may be replaced with something of less value. The conformity of our wills to His Will is not the destruction of our free wills, but rather the proper alignment and direction of our free wills. As we align with God's holy Will, we become one with Him. We are finite and are lost in His Infinity, but we remain in Him. St. Paul expresses it, "It is no longer I, but Christ Jesus living within me." We put off this life to take up a better life. We put off our wills to take up a better Will.

The Mysteries of the Cross are beyond our limited comprehension. As such, there is an endless treasure for us to discover if we will take the time and effort to ask and seek it. The promise of Jesus is true if we will lovingly embrace our crosses, He will come to us and help us. He will take the weight of them from us and make them light. He will take away that which is bitter in them and make them sweet. He will transform all that is sorrowful in them into true joy.

Denying ourselves and embracing our daily crosses requires that we have faith — that we believe the promises of Jesus Christ — but most importantly it demands that we love Him. Love makes all things possible and takes away all the negative aspects and makes them positive. Love and faith then give us reason to hope, and hope, in turn, increases both love and faith.

It is our loving hope and prayer that everyone will develop accepting belief in the Words of Jesus Christ and find true peace, comfort, and joy in uniting our crosses and sacrifices with His. The pain of our penances and sufferings are not even worthy to be compared to the joy and pleasure that will await us in Heaven.



“On the Way of the Cross, you see, my children, only the first step is painful. Our greatest cross is the fear of crosses. . . We have not the courage to carry our cross, and we are very much mistaken; for, whatever we do, the cross holds us tight - we cannot escape from it. What, then, have we to lose? Why not love our crosses, and make use of them to take us to heaven?”

~St. John Marie Vianney

LENT: PENANCE

Father Anthony Lentz, OFM

Now that we are about to begin the holy season of Lent (or quite possibly it has already begun), it would be good for us to reflect on our spiritual progress. We should ask ourselves, “How much spiritual progress have I actually made with each passing Lent?” For most of us, if we are honest, the answer is “very little.” If this is the case then, let us resolve to make this Lent spiritually beneficial by taking very seriously its obligations and its counsels.

It is during this season that the Church imposes upon her faithful certain required penances. All Catholics between 21 and 59 years of age are required to fast between meals and mitigating, in varied respects, the amounts they eat during the two smaller meals, which is breakfast and lunch [or dinner]. She also places upon her children the obligation of abstaining from meat at these smaller meals and only eating it once a day at the main meal, this usually is supper (**Note:** This is what is termed partial abstinence. Of

course on Fridays we must abstain from meat altogether.) The Church imposes these slight penances upon us for our own benefit, and in order that we understand their importance, she obliges us to follow them under the pain of sin. The Catholic, who does not want to go against God and the Church by committing a sin, will certainly bear this “burden.” This is a penitential season after all, and the Church must remind her children about this with concrete examples, such as corporal penance. Besides these mandatory penances, the Church also encourages us to practice personal penances during Lent. Most will give-up a favorite food (such as chocolate, fast-food, pizza etc.) or a favorite past-time (such as watching television, sports, nights-out with friends etc.) during this season. It seems that it is easier to keep those “mandatory penances,” than those which are “self-imposed,” because of the serious obligation attached to them. While with those that are “self-imposed” one may more easily excuse himself from them

whenever it becomes too difficult or inconvenient. How many Catholics will make the resolution to not eat, let's say, sweets during Lent but when offered some will take it thinking to themselves, "Well just this once I will have this cake, besides it's not like I am committing a sin." True, it is not sinful, but you have let a golden opportunity to advance in holiness pass you by. Even though it is in this small and seemingly insignificant matter, you have refused to "take up your cross, and follow Christ."

We have to look to change our mindset! We must ask ourselves, "How can I better keep my self-imposed penances?" The answer is simple: we should approach them as if they were a serious obligation. Here are five suggestions on how to go about doing this.

First, you must hold yourself accountable for failing to keep your resolution. This does not mean any grand gesture nor does it mean admitting it to anyone else, but merely acknowledging it to God. This can be done by simply placing your hand across your heart and bowing your head with a humble demeanor, or you

could slightly strike your breast with your fist while saying a "Mea culpa!" True, you could just think about how regretful you are for failing and not perform any gesture whatsoever, but it is likely that would not leave a lasting impression upon you. Remember, it is the whole man, body, and soul, that failed, and so the whole man should acknowledge its failure. Remember this gesture should be slight and almost imperceptible. Only you and God need to know what you are doing.

Before moving on to the next point, I would like to reiterate to the reader that if you indeed fail at this from time to time that, ***YOU ARE NOT COMMITTING A SIN!*** I must be very emphatic on this point, in order to prevent anyone from becoming scrupulous, that is, thinking there is a sin when there is no sin. This would be a serious roadblock in the advancement towards holiness and must be avoided. These suggestions are meant to aid you, not to discourage or confuse you!

Now let us continue. Second, pray to the Blessed Virgin for help. Our Blessed Mother

wants to see us draw closer to her Divine Son. She will help us and all we need to do is ask! When should this be done? The best time is during the morning when you say your morning prayers. How should this be done? You can do it any way that you want, but if you are looking for a suggestion I would begin by reciting the *Memorare*:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession, was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence, I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Third, make the resolution just for today. The thought of having to keep a penitential resolution for 40 days, or roughly 6 weeks, can seem like an insurmountable task. This is why you should only focus upon today! Yesterday you may have failed, but yesterday

is gone. Tomorrow you may succeed, but it has not happened yet. You only have to worry about today! Recall the words in the *Our Father*: “Give us **this day** our daily bread!” This does not only refer to our physical needs but more especially it refers to our spiritual needs! (**Note: The reason why Lent is roughly 6 weeks is that the Church does not oblige the faithful to fast and abstain on Sundays because it is the Lord’s Day.**)

Fourth, at the end of the night when you examine your conscience recall how many times you also failed in your resolution if you indeed failed. If you did not fail, but you were faithful then you should thank Our Lord, His Mother, your Guardian Angel, and your Patron Saint before you retire. Let your last thought before falling asleep be a heartfelt, “Deo Gratias!”

Fifth, do not fret about temptations against your spiritual resolution. Let us seek the advice of the great St. Francis de Sales in his book *Introduction to the Devout Life*. In it he deals with temptation in general, that is temptation to sin, but we can

apply it those temptations that are merely against our spiritual resolutions in particular. He writes: “Now as to all these trifling temptations of vanity, suspicion, vexation, jealousy, envy, and the like, which flit around one like flies or gnats, now settling on one’s nose, — anon stinging one’s cheek, — as it is wholly impossible altogether to free one’s-self from their importunity; the best resistance one can make is not to be fretted by them. All these things may worry one, but they cannot really harm us, so long as our wills are firmly resolved to serve God. Therefore despise all these trivial onslaughts, and do not even deign to think about them; but let them buzz about your ears as much as they please, and flit hither and thither just as you tolerate flies; — even if they sting you, and strive to light within your heart, do no more than simply remove them, not fighting with them, or arguing, but simply doing that which is precisely contrary to their suggestions, and specially making acts of the Love of God. If you will take my advice, you will not toil on obstinately in resisting them by exercising the contrary virtue, for that would become a sort of

struggle with the foe; — but, after making an act of this directly contrary virtue (always supposing you have time to recognize what the definite temptation is), simply turn with your whole heart towards Jesus Christ Crucified, and lovingly kiss His Sacred Feet. This is the best way to conquer the Enemy, whether in small or great temptations; for inasmuch as the Love of God contains the perfection of every virtue, and that more excellently than the very virtues themselves; it is also the most sovereign remedy against all vice, and if you accustom your mind under all manner of temptation to have recourse to this safety-place, you will not be constrained to enter upon a worryingly minute investigation of your temptations, but, so soon as you are anywise troubled, your mind will turn naturally to its one sovereign remedy. Moreover, this way of dealing with temptation is so offensive to the Evil One, that, finding he does but provoke souls to an increased love of God by his assaults, he discontinues them. In short, you may be sure that if you dally with your minor, oft-recurring temptations, and examine too closely into them

in detail, you will simply stupefy yourself to no purpose.” (Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales; Part IV; chapter IX; pages 120-121) To apply this advice to the keeping of spiritual resolutions I can suggest, as St. Francis does, to: 1) immediately refuse the temptation against your resolution; 2) firmly resolve to keep your resolution and finally; 3) turn your mind to Christ crucified, and in your

mind’s eye kiss His Sacred Feet!

In conclusion, the Lenten season should not be looked upon as something negative but as something positive, for it is a time that we can make great spiritual progress; but just like anything else you only get out of it what you are willing to put into it. Make use of this holy season and draw closer to Christ crucified.



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ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

An Autobiography

CHAPTER ONE EARLIEST MEMORIES

Continued

Having summed up in a few words all that God has done for me, I will now relate in detail the story of my childhood. I know that what to others might seem wearisome will not be without charm for my Mother. Besides, the memories I am about to evoke are not mine alone. It was at your side my early years were spent, and together we shared the devoted care of God-fearing parents. May they now bless me tenderly, who am the least of their children, and help me to sing the divine mercies!

Up to the time of my entry into Carmel, the story of my soul is marked by three distinct periods. The first, though short, is not without its rich harvest of memories. It extends from the dawn of reason to the death of our dearly loved Mother: that is to say, till I was four years and eight months old. God, in His goodness, did me the favour of awakening my intelligence when I was still very young,

and He has so deeply engraved in my mind the impressions of childhood that past events seem to have happened but yesterday. His design, no doubt, was to make me know and appreciate the excellent mother He had given me, but alas! His divine hand soon took her from me to crown her in Heaven.

Throughout my life it has pleased God to surround me with affection; my earliest recollections are of tender caresses and smiles. And if He allowed so much love to be lavished upon me, He also endowed me with a warm and sensitive heart to return it. Of my affection for Papa and Mamma it would be difficult to convey an idea, and as I think of the thousand ways in which it was shown I cannot suppress a smile.

You have given me the letters which Mamma wrote to you while you were at Le Mans, studying at the Visitation Convent there. They are charming letters inspired by a mother's

love and hence too often full of my praise. I shall find it easier to quote from them, though I remember distinctly the events to which they refer. In proof of what I have said about my way of showing affection for my parents, here is what Mamma writes:

“Baby is the dearest little rogue; she will kiss me and at the same time wish me to die. ‘Oh, how I wish you would die, dear Mamma!’ Astonished at being scolded for saying such a thing, she will answer: ‘It is because I want you to go to Heaven, and you say that to get there we must die!’ In her outbursts of affection for her Father, she wishes him also to die. The dear little thing will hardly ever leave me; she delights in following me about, especially in the garden. If I am not there, she refuses to stay, and is so inconsolable that she has to be brought back to me again. She will not even go upstairs by herself without calling at every step, ‘Mamma, Mamma!’ and if I forget to answer, ‘Yes, darling!’ she waits where she is and will not move.”

I was nearly three years old when Mamma wrote :

“Little Therese asked me the other day if she would go to

Heaven. ‘Yes, if you are good,’ I told her. ‘Oh, Mamma,’ she answered, ‘then if I am not good, shall I go to hell? Well, I know what I will do—I will fly to you in Heaven, and you will hold me tight in your arms, and how could God take me away then?’ I saw by her look she was convinced that God could do nothing to her if she hid herself in my arms.

“Marie loves her little sister very much; indeed, she is a child who delights us all. She is extraordinarily outspoken, and it is charming to see her run after me to confess her childish faults: ‘Mamma, I gave Celine a push; I slapped her once; but I will not do it again.’ The moment she has done anything mischievous, everyone must know. Yesterday, without meaning to do so, she tore off a small piece of wall paper; you would have been sorry for her — she wanted to tell her Father immediately. When he came home four hours later and everyone else had forgotten about it, she ran at once to Marie, saying: ‘Tell Papa that I tore the paper,’ and she waited like a criminal for sentence. There is an idea in her little head, that if she accuses herself, she will be the more readily forgiven.”

Papa's name fills me with many happy memories. As soon as he came home, I would run to meet him, seat myself on his foot, and so he would carry me about through house and garden. Then he would take me in his arms, lift me high up in the air, set me on his shoulder and load me with caresses. Mamma used to say, laughingly, that he always did whatever I wanted; and he would answer: "Well, why not? She is the Queen!" Yet I cannot say that he spoilt me. I remember one day while I was merrily swinging, he called out as he passed: "Come and give me a kiss, little Queen!" Contrary to my usual custom, I would not stir, and answered pertly: "You must come your-self for it, Papa!" But he wisely took no notice of me.

"You naughty little girl," exclaimed Marie, "to answer Papa so rudely!" Her reproof took effect. I immediately got off the swing and the whole house resounded with my cries. As I hurried upstairs, this time not waiting to call "Mamma!" at every step, my one thought was to find Papa and make my peace with him, which, needless to say, was quickly done.

I could not bear to think I had grieved our beloved parents,

and I acknowledged my faults instantly, as this little anecdote, related by Mamma, will show:

"One morning before going downstairs I wanted to kiss Therese, but she seemed to be fast asleep and I did not like to wake her. Marie, seeing my hesitation, said: 'I am certain she is only pretending.' I then bent down towards her, and immediately she hid herself under the bed-clothes, saying in the tone of a spoilt child: 'I don't want anyone to look at me.' I was not pleased with her, and I told her so. A minute or two later I heard her crying, and shortly after, to my great surprise, I found her at my side. She had managed to get out of her cot unaided, and, stumbling over her long nightdress, had come downstairs barefoot. Her little face was wet with tears: 'Mamma,' she said, throwing herself on my knee, 'forgive me for being so naughty!' Pardon was soon granted; I pressed the little angel to my heart, half smothering her with kisses."

To Be Continued.....





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Sister Agnes' Favorites

And I saw the river
over which every soul
must pass
to reach the kingdom
of heaven
and the name of that river
was suffering
and I saw a boat
which carries souls
across the river
and the name of the that boat
was love.

Saint John of the Cross

The Catholic Faith RADIO PROGRAM

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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 ONE

The Principles of Self-Surrender

CHAPTER THREE

ARTICLE 3

THE SURRENDERED SOUL SHOULD AVOID USELESS ANXIETIES

God requires of the soul only the accomplishment of the present duty. He forbids all disturbing thoughts about the past, all preoccupation about the future.

Thus the soul should confine herself to recognizing the Will of God as it is presented to her, and acting in conformity.

God takes my hand; He walks beside me. I have only to accommodate myself to His step, without looking back, without peering anxiously into



the future, without desiring to walk more quickly or more slowly than my Divine Guide. *Tenuisti manum dexteram meam et in voluntate tua deduxisti me.* (Ps. 72:24) Thus He will go with me to the very end of my journey.

The soul, therefore, ought to cast aside all disquietude, ought to study to discern the Will of God at each moment. As soon as she has discerned it, she should give herself to God by an act of love and of conformity.

God has been pleased to make our part in the work of sanctification so easy! And yet, in this very simple matter,

certain souls manage to create difficulties for themselves.

They are ready to do the Will of God when they see it; but how are they to recognize it? And their mind, with a kind of fever, seizes upon this object of the present moment, examines it, turns it about again and again, scrutinizes it, weighs it, analyzes it, to make very sure that it contains the Divine Will. And the more they disturb themselves, the more they doubt; the more they doubt, the more they wish to examine. Thus tormented, the soul falls into scruples; and the more she tries to extricate herself, the more she becomes entangled.

Poor scrupulous soul! Learn to serve God in peace and tranquility. The obligation of the present moment ceases to be a duty for thee when thou dost not recognize it. If thy mind does not perceive it, for thee it is no longer the Will of God. It is not necessary to devote long effort to this examination. A second suffices, time to look toward God. Conscience will give the answer. If it is affirmative, the will accepts it; if the answer is negative, the will gives up the

idea; if it is doubtful, the will goes on without being disturbed.

When God wishes to give us a command, He does so clearly. He does not desire us to be troubled; for trouble is a cloud that hides Him from our view.

Poor souls subject to scruples sometimes lose considerable time asking themselves which actions are most pleasing to God. Shall they devote their free time to reading rather than meditation, to manual labor rather than study? Shall they please God more by burying themselves in solitude, or by conversing about spiritual things, by leading a life of contemplation, or by spending themselves in the service of the neighbor?

Poor soul! It is vain for thee to ask thyself these questions. Let thy Confessor, thy Director, solve them. Do not dwell upon them. Do what is commanded at the present moment. If nothing is prescribed, do what at first sight seems best. Stop short of all further examination and all disquietude. God especially desires that the soul should lose neither its time nor its

interior repose. Peace of heart is so great a treasure that God will change His order rather than cause a soul to lose tranquility.

ARTICLE 4

GOD HIMSELF INSTRUCTS THE DETACHED SOUL

If the soul is thus faithful to the practice of seeking the Divine Will at each moment, by a simple glance, she soon acquires marvelous facility in discerning her duty. A secret instinct tells her that such an act is agreeable to God, that such another would be less pleasing to Him. This infused discernment is the privilege of the simple soul. God loves to converse with upright hearts. He communicates Himself to them in a thousand most mysterious ways.

Usually, He acts within them by secret impressions. The soul feels that God would be pleased if she engaged in a certain occupation, made a certain sacrifice. Without hesitation, without examination, she surrenders herself; she carries out the wish of her Beloved. God thus directs all her occupations.

Sometimes He calls the soul nearer to Him. When she hears this appeal, she leaves any employment that is not commanded by obedience, and hastens to Jesus. She knows well that today the Divine Master wishes to speak to her more intimately, to tell her His secrets, to allow her to console Him for the ingratitude of others.

The soul does not know how to account for the supernatural instinct which urges her; she only knows her impression and understands that it comes from God.

Sometimes her conduct seems strange to un-enlightened men. They treat her as if she were imprudent or even extravagant. She lets them talk and goes on her way. She takes care that her actions shall never be contrary to her evident duties, to the clear manifestations of the Will of God.

Faithfully she carries out the obligations of her state. She is obedient to her holy rules and to her superiors, thoughtful for her equals, charitable and courteous in her relations. Aside from this, she gives all her attention to the interior

voice which calls her, and which intimates from on high the desires of God. This voice is like a gentle breeze which in passing softly touches the soul. The latter feels the divine impression; she thrills at the contact; and instantly she obeys.

O divine world! What marvels thou dost contain! What mysteries God operates in the soul that is submissive to His constant action! What perpetual heart-to-heart intercourse! What outpourings of love! But the soul is also completely recollected within herself; she has dismissed all anxiety as to the past or the future; she lives only for this present moment; she is altogether concentrated upon God, altogether attentive to His Voice, altogether surrendered to His action.

Ah, if souls knew how to content themselves with this one thing necessary, God would work wonders in all!

But, to do this, one must bid farewell to a world of thoughts which fill the brain, to desires, to ambitions, to numberless fears that are fermenting in the depths of the sensible being, to aspirations, affections, attach-

ments which enchain the heart, tossing it about, wearing it out, leaving it dry and disgusted with the things of God. One must give up the idea of guiding oneself according to one's own spirit and must cast all one's cares upon God, avoiding any reservation for self-love. In a word, one must forget self and be surrendered to God in the present moment.

How sad it is to see so many good souls who are called to intimate life with Jesus, and who are yet absorbed in a thousand useless things, pre-occupied, sad, bored, disquieted, because they will not limit their life to the single present moment which God is granting them!

Simple souls, what have you to do with the future, which God alone knows, and of which He alone can have care? What have you to do with the past, which you can never recall, and which God has forgotten if it has been bad, which He has kept if it has been good? What have you to do with present events which concern others and not yourselves? What have you to do with the persons with whom you live, whose actions

and words you are not required to judge? Of what importance to you is the entire world? For you there is one single important thing: the present moment allotted to you. Make this as holy as you can, according to the measure of grace which God gives you, according to the physical and moral strength granted you, according to the knowledge you possess. And then be at rest. Your sanctity, from this moment, is attained.

Lord, create in us a simple and upright heart. And thou, O Blessed Virgin, let us share in thy stainless purity, in thy perfect detachment! O chaste Dove, grant that we may touch the earth only on tiptoe, and that at the first danger of contact with any evil thing, we may take our flight to the Divine Ark, the Heart of Jesus!

ARTICLE 5

TO GIVE ONESELF TO GOD, IT SUFFICES TO LOVE HIM

God has comprised in the duty of the present moment our obligation to sanctify ourselves.

Who will believe that this Divine exactness is exaggerated?

MARCH 2019

On God's part, our sanctification is not a difficult task.

But there is a second consideration. This objective duty, however simple it be, must be accomplished. Does the subjective execution of this task present the same facilities?

To become a saint is to give oneself, body and soul, to God; it is to submit the senses to the reason, the reason to the will, and the will to God. It is to direct all the actions of the exterior and interior faculties to God, their Beginning, their End, and their Model; it is to establish perfect order in the domain of the passions; it is to wage victorious war against bad habits, to restrain perverse inclinations, to rise above the current of pernicious maxims and seductions of the age; in a word, it is to struggle ceaselessly against self, the world, and the devil.

Is this such a light task? And can it be said that the gift of oneself is an easy matter?

That which seems a heavy weight for our shoulders, God has singularly lightened; that which seems complicated in the machinery of sanctification

is very simple; for God Himself is the Maker. That which frightens us by its multiplicity and diversity, God has reduced to admirable unity.

The human machine is the production of a Divine Artificer. It is perfect in all its parts. In the center, God has placed the great wheel, the will. This sets in action all the other faculties and directs them as it pleases. More perfect than any mechanism, the will has liberty in its movements. It functions when it pleases and as it pleases; upon it, all depends.

The exterior senses furnish supplies for the interior senses and the intelligence; and this latter is subject to the empire of the will. The sensible appetite and the passions are also servants of the will. She alone is queen; she gives her orders, and her vassals obey.

Thus, in the will is included the entire man. But the will, in its turn, is included in one of its actions, love. The will may desire, fear, hope, despair, hate, rejoice, be sad. All these movements are manifestations of one single fundamental act, love. The life of the will, its

need, its irresistible tendency, is to love. If the love is regulated, the whole will is good, the entire man is holy. If the love is not regulated, the whole will is perverse, the entire man is bad.

To direct one's life to God is therefore to regulate love. All the work of sanctification consists in giving one's whole heart to God. "*Ama et quod vis fac,*" says Saint Augustine: "*Love, and do what you will.*" For, if you love God, you will do only works of love; you will avoid the evil which destroys love; you will shun the dangers which would cause the risk of losing it. That is the profound meaning of the single great Commandment: *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo . . . Diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum.* (Matt 22:37, 38.)

My soul, in order to accomplish thy duty of the present moment, thou must give thyself to God by love, must surrender to Him thy whole heart; then, under the inspiration of that love, accomplish the present work, bear the cross placed upon thee, avoid the forbidden evil. And if, at this precise moment,

thou art not thinking of thy God, to yield Him thy heart, fear not; thy gift was given long ago; thou hast not retracted it. All the acts thou dost perform have been offered in advance to God. They are the fruits of a tree thou hast given Him years since, which gift thou hast renewed a thousand times by a pure and simple act of bestowal.

To sanctify oneself is then to give oneself to God at the present moment by an act of ardent love, abandoning oneself to do His Will, according to one's strength and light, leaving to Him the care of disposing of His creature as He desires, yielding to Him the past and the future, charging Him to foresee all, to arrange all, to repair all.

ARTICLE 6

TO LOVE, IT IS ENOUGH TO WILL TO LOVE

Nothing is more beautiful, nothing more redoubtable, than a disciplined army composed of brave men commanded by experienced officers. The strength of such an army is in the hands of one man. The chief commands; his

order is repeated through the whole staff and reaches the ears of the last soldier. A single will holds the will of thousands; a single thought directs their intelligence.

Man, with his diverse faculties, with his passions and his senses and the infinite multitude of their acts, movements and impressions, is like a great army. A perfect hierarchy rules in him. The general is the will.

The will is able to give orders to all its subordinates. Only the act of willing is necessary for this. The command is immediately transmitted to the least of the faculties and is executed. If the will is faithful to its king, all the army will be faithful; if the will betrays its flag, the army passes to the enemy.

To fulfil its duty, the will needs only to act its part, to be the will, that is to say, to be as a firm chief who knows his line of conduct and is determined to be obeyed.

O my soul, thou art ignorant of the strength that God has given thee! Thou hast never taken account of the energy thou dost expend. God, Who has given thee thy will to

command the other faculties, has endowed it with necessary qualities for government. It depends upon thee to utilize these faculties, to develop them, to make them perfect by constant practice and humble prayer.

Fear not the difficulties that rise to meet thee. At the head of this army of passions, affections, feelings, fears, hopes, anxieties, which are within thee and are in tumult, place the will. It will re-establish order. Bid it keep its eyes fixed upon God to know His wishes, then transmit the commands to its subordinates. This is to govern; this is to be supreme.

Then trouble thyself no more about what has hitherto disquieted thee. Do not follow thy thoughts, thy desires, thy imaginations, into all their countless detours; do not fear the movements of revolt attempted by thy unconquered passions; pay no attention to the clamor of this populace. It

is not the work of one day to effect the conquest of this mob accustomed to license. But gradually order will be established, provided thou wilt secure for thy will all its power to command.

To live by the will! Oh, great secret! Not to let oneself be guided by caprice and humor, not to let oneself be carried away by the stream of apprehensions, desires, and joys, not to let oneself be ruled by the impressions of the moment, the suggestions of the senses, and the maxims of others; to remain immovable as a rock while the tempest of the passions is raging, while the furious sea threatens to bear all away - oh, how splendid!

My soul, this is the life that thou wilt lead. The whole man is included in the will. The will concentrates all its energy in the single act of loving. At every moment, present to thy God this ardent act, and thou art strong as God Himself.

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FRANCISCAN SAINTS

MARCH 9TH

St. Catharine of Bologna

Virgin, Second Order

The birth of our saint was foretold to her devout father by the Blessed Virgin, with the announcement that the child would be a brilliant light throughout the world. On the feast of the Annunciation of our Lady in the year 1413, Catharine was born at Bologna. Her father, John of Vigri, was a relative of the marquis of Este, who resided in Ferrara. It was his wish that little Catharine, who charmed everyone with her beauty and loveliness, be brought to his court, to be educated there with his daughter. Here Catharine learnt the foreign languages and especially Latin, painting, and everything that belongs to the culture of a young woman of high rank. People admired in her the singular wisdom and insight with which she read the profound works of the Fathers of the Church, along with her great modesty and such purity

of soul that she was looked upon more as an angelic than as a human being.

The court with all its splendor was not able to fascinate Catharine. The most distinguished suitors were compelled to withdraw without the least hope of obtaining her hand in marriage; she entertained no other desire than to be plighted forever to Jesus Christ, the spouse of her heart. When she was seventeen years old, she obtained the consent of her mother — her father having already died — to join a pious company of young women in Ferrara who led a religious life but had not yet adopted a definite rule. Catharine appeared among them as a mirror of all the virtues, but meanwhile she was also being subjected to very severe temptations of the evil spirit.

Four years later, a royal princess founded a convent for this society

according to the rule of St. Clare; several zealous sisters from Mantua introduced the young women to the Poor Clare rule of life. Catharine was charged with the duties of the bakery; she cheerfully undertook this laborious service, and even when the heat began to affect her eyes, she remained at her post as long as the abbess required it.

One day, just as she had placed the loaves in the oven, the bell called her to the choir for some very special religious service; she made the Sign of the Cross over the loaves and said: "I commend you to our Lord." She was not in a position to return to the bakery until five hours later, and certainly believed that everything had been burnt by that time. However, when she drew forth the loaves from the oven, they were nicer than ever.

After a time she was entrusted with the duties of mistress of novices. Catharine tried, indeed, to be excused, explaining that she was entirely incapable for this task; but she was compelled by obedience to accept it. Her diffidence in herself drew down God's blessing on her efforts to give the novices a good training. She endeavored, above all, to impress

on their young hearts that they should desire nothing but the honor of God and the fulfillment of His holy will, and so she recommended that they look upon the holy rule and obedience to their superiors as their guides. Her own experience taught her how to protect them from the snares of the devil. "Sometimes," she said, "he inspires souls with an inordinate zeal for a certain virtue or some special pious exercise, so that they will be motivated in its practice by passion; or again, he permits them to become discouraged so that they will neglect everything because they are wearied and disgusted. It is necessary to overcome the one snare as well as the other." She also taught them to use the golden mean that leads to solid virtue.

For a long time she herself was troubled with the temptation to sleep during the spiritual exercises. Once when she was again heroically struggling against it during holy Mass, God almighty permitted her to hear the angelic choirs singing after the elevation. From then on the temptation was overcome, and she was even able to devote hours to prayer during the night.

Catharine had spent twenty-four years in the convent at Ferrara and had trained many sisters in the way of sanctity when, at the request of the city of Bologna, she was sent with fifteen sisters to establish a similar convent in her native town. She was appointed abbess, and governed her community with wisdom and motherly love. She was particularly solicitous for the sick sisters. In dispensing to them spiritual consolation she said: "My dear sisters, you are now the true brides of the Divine Saviour, who chose pain and sufferings as His portion."

Although she was sickly from the time that she was twenty-two years old, she never complained. When at times it seemed to her that her afflicted body would be justified in complaining, she would say to herself: "O bundle of corruption that will soon turn into dust, why should you complain? It appears as if you had not yet learnt to be a true servant of Christ."

She was particularly tactful in preserving peace within herself and peace among the members of her community. Hence she was also loved by all of them.

When she died on March 9, 1463, sounds of sobbing and weeping were heard everywhere in the convent. But even after her death her sisters were to be made joyful through her. Her body, which had been the temple of so chaste and immaculately pure a soul, diffused a sweet odor. It remained incorrupt and retained its quality of flexibility like that of a living body. Thus it can still be seen in Bologna, robed in a costly garment presented by St. Charles Borromeo and seated on a throne, under a crystal shrine. Innumerable miracles reward the faithful for their devotion to her. Pope Clement XI canonized her.

ON THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY

1. On the throne on which the chaste body of St. Catharine of Bologna is honored, one reads the words in which the Holy Ghost pronounces the praise of chastity: "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal. It triumpheth crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts." (Wis. 4:12) Undefiled purity requires a struggle in every state of life, in every

period of human life; but such a reward is well worth the struggle. — Have you fought faithfully for this precious treasure?

2. Consider, on the other hand, what an abominable vice unchastity is. While chastity raises people even unto angels and sometimes preserves them from corruption after death, impurity degrades them to the level of the beast and sometimes produces corruption even before the soul has left the body. It becomes an abomination in the sight of God, in the sight of men, and in its own eyes. Here on earth, impurity deprives a man of all peace of heart and of all the joys of life, and if he is not sincerely converted, he shall in eternity have his portion in the “pool burning with fire and brimstone.” (Apoc. 21:8) — Who would not be frightened at beginnings which lead to so terrible an end?

3. Consider the dangers that lead to the defilement of chastity. The softness and sensuality with which we pamper our bodies are the principal ones among the dangers. In the sensual appetite we carry a slumbering serpent in

our bosom. If we nourish it with sensuality, it will not be long ere we feel its poisonous sting. Reading dangerous books, looking at shameless pictures, attending frivolous plays and dances, and associating with dissolute companions aggravate to a still greater degree this evil propensity. No poison is so infectious as that of impurity. Amid so many dangers. Christians may well say with the Apostle: “Unhappy man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24) But we, too, can gain the victory with the help of God and through the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, as did all the other chaste souls who are now triumphing in heaven.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Grant, O God, that we, Thy servants, may receive help through the intercession of the holy virgin Catharine, that by the sweet odor of her virtues, we may be joyfully attracted to Thy sanctuary. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE GREATEST TREASURE

Reverend L. Chiavarino



CHAPTER IV

JESUS IN HOLY MASS MAKES SATISFACTION FOR OUR SINS

Which one of us, dear readers, is without sin? Who is able to say that he has never committed a sin? Since sin is an infinite offence against God, not all our good works nor all the prayers of the saints, nor all the merits of the martyrs will suffice to atone for it. Every sin deserves grave punishment. Who is there who can withhold the hand of God from hurling upon sinners the thunderbolts of His just anger? In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, if we place no impediment in the way, Jesus does this. Through the ministry of the priest, He offers Himself a Victim to appease the just anger of His Eternal Father.

A naval Captain called Alfonso Albucherche, who was a brave and daring man, found himself in a raging tempest in imminent danger of losing his own life and the lives of all his passengers. All hope seemed lost; the waves tossed the ship about like a toy and it seemed about to sink into the depths of the ocean. Passengers and sailors alike shouted in desperation, each thinking himself lost and invariably commending himself to God. Despite his own anxiety the captain went about trying to raise the spirits of his men and the passengers, but as the fury of the storm increased even he began to feel his courage fail him. Just then he perceived a woman who stood on the deck clasping in her arms a child of a few months.

“Woman,” exclaimed the captain, “let me have your child.”

“Never,” replied the woman. “You want to throw him into the sea.”

“Oh, no,” said Albucherche, “I hope on the contrary, that he will be the means of saving us from the sea.”

Then he took the child from his mother's arms, and, lifting it toward the sky, he prayed, “O great God, God of justice, Who art both terrible and omnipotent, we acknowledge our sins and that by them we have merited death. But this child is innocent and for love of him we beseech Thee, O God of love and mercy, to forgive us and to save us from this storm and from death.”

His act of lively faith and his simple and fervent prayer were so pleasing to God that soon the wind and the waves were calmed, the sky cleared, and the ship and its passengers were saved from disaster.

If a mere human child of this earth can so move God to pity, how much more can the Child Jesus do, when He is offered as a Victim of peace in the Mass? Such an offering is made each day in every Mass. And while the priest elevates the Sacred Host

the great miracle of safety and salvation is repeated. In the Sacrifice of the Mass lies the safety of the world and its hope of preservation. There is no doubt that were it not for the Mass the just punishment due to our sins would have caused the destruction of this world many times over.

There is at Rome a magnificent painting called “The Last Mass.” In it are depicted the events preliminary to the end of the world. In the background is seen a priest about to finish the Holy Sacrifice while the Angels, bent over their trumpets, await its consummation that they may then sound the tremendous hour of Divine Justice.

This painting is the work of Leonardo da Vinci. By it he expressed his conviction that “without the Mass the world would long since have been destroyed under the weight of its own iniquities.”

Let us not fail to attach the greatest importance to the Holy Mass; let us embrace every opportunity to attend it with devotion and love. And whenever it is possible to do so let us receive Holy Communion at Mass.

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