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

THERE'S ALREADY A LAW AGAINST EVIL

Bishop Giles, OFM

It is said that we cannot legislate morality. It appears that we have gone well beyond the stage where a written law has any positive effect on the actions of many people. The Pro-Life movement is working diligently to get pro-life laws passed. The pro-death movement repeatedly points out that when murder is illegal then it will take place in dangerous places and dangerous methods will be employed rather than having the murder take place in a “safe” and “healthy” place. Instead of murder being committed in a clinic with sterile scalpels and forceps, a pro-life law would force murders to be committed in dirty alleys and dark places with non-sterile coat hangers and knives. In short, their argument is that a law will have no deterrent on murder. Women will murder their children regardless of the law, so they suggest we help them do it as easily and conveniently as possible.

The anti second amendment group wishes to legislate guns out of the hands of their fellow

men. The pro-second amendment group suggests that when guns are outlawed then only outlaws will have guns. Outlawing guns will not stop crime or murders. Guns don't kill people. People kill people.

While the pro-life movement is correct in seeking a positive law protecting life, the pro-death movement is also correct that murders will still continue even if it makes criminals out of the murderers. If enough people break the law it becomes impossible to enforce, and then it is soon ignored and dismissed altogether. In the United States of America, divorce once required a court hearing and a judge. The courts were soon overwhelmed with divorce cases and so it necessitated legalizing and expediting “no-fault” divorces. The laws follow the demands of a large enough group of people. It is easier to decriminalize an evil than it is to punish a large portion of the population. This appears to be what has been happening in the world in recent history. Regrettably, we

have entered into a perverse and dangerous stage of history.

When looking at the process and the number of laws we legislate into existence, we often wonder, "Do we really need all these laws." After all, God saw only a need to give us ten laws, and these ten He condensed into two essential ones. (To love God with a preferential love of our entire being, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.) When men brazenly and wantonly disregard the Law of God and ignore and dismiss the eternal punishment that is demanded for the transgression of God's Law, what hope do we have of legislating positive morals into existence?

When God says clearly, "Thou shall not kill," and threatens us with eternal perdition if we break His Commandment and yet men still kill then, there seems to be no purpose in a man-made law to this effect. When men ignore the authority of God what makes us think they will respect the authority of government?

It is not additional laws that we need. We only need to start obeying or enforcing the laws that we already have. It is foolish for us to think we can

make legal what God has already declared is illegal. What is needed is a change in the core mores of society. Instead of sin and vice being the norm, we need to work to make virtue commonplace; and sin and vice must become the exception rather than the norm.

When the Protestant ideology entered the Church and became the norm, the Faith was lost. Without Faith, the Sacraments were watered down and washed away. Without the Church, and Faith, and Sacraments there is no sacramental grace. And without this grace sin builds upon sin. Divorce, once "legalized," fanned the flames and led to greater promiscuity. Greater promiscuity and pornography set the stage for the devaluation of human life. People become objects of pleasure rather than true persons. Sexual relations become nothing more than selfish pleasure-seeking rather than the holy means of working with God in the creation of new life. Thus, we not only legalize but openly promote all manner of sexual perversity and abuse. The unnatural and unholy practice

of seeking pleasure and avoiding all obligation or responsibility is the cornerstone of the sinful contraceptives and when these fail, then the demonic murder of children.

Our “entertainment” and games have for a long time focused upon disdain for human life. The “Old Westerns” often portrayed indiscriminate killing of Native Americans who were dehumanized and even demonized. Gun duels were often portrayed as we were led to desire that the protagonist wins by killing the antagonist. The modern shows now strive to make ever increasing “body counts” with lots of blood flowing. Electronic gaming award points and bonuses for ever more violent killing.

If we follow the daily news, we see over and over again: killings, murders, robberies, etc. All these have a profound desensitizing effect upon us. These crimes have lost their shock value because there are so many of them reported to us every day. We reach the point where we are only really concerned when it happens to us or someone we know.

We might argue that this is just entertainment, and everyone knows that this is not real, but we cannot deny that we are being desensitized to the value of human life. Online pornography displays person after person as endless objects of sexual entertainment pleasure to be chosen as we would choose items on a shelf in a store. People have lost their humanity in the eyes of sexual pleasure seekers and, are nothing more than objects to be used and discarded like tissue paper.

From this desensitizing it is a small step to consider those who are physically present before us in the same light – as nothing more than objects for our pleasure or entertainment to be discarded whenever we want. This is what is easily perceivable in the sexual scandals in the secular world around us as well as in the “Modern Catholic Hierarchy.” Sexual assaults including pedophilia are made possible through dehumanizing the victim. There is a failure to see or appreciate others as having immortal souls and made in the image and likeness of God.

It seems natural when we see some evil to say: “There ought

to be a law against that.” If we reflect for a moment, we should realize that there already is. God has already covered this either in the Ten Commandments or in the all-encompassing law of Love. We simply need to start living up to these laws. If we fail in these then, obviously, any human law is doomed to fail likewise.

What we need are not more laws, but rather different mores. We need higher standards in our lives than what the world offers us. Our customs and habits need to be spiritualized. We need to constantly remind ourselves that we are called to a higher standard. We must strive for perfection as Jesus tells us: “Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (*St. Matthew 5:48*) We obviously are not perfect but are weak miserable sinners, yet we must be always striving to reach higher. The pinnacle of our physical and spiritual development is to arrive at the end of our lives with hearts filled with love – loving God with our entire being and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves.

This development needs to begin in the simplest and most insignificant things. As we build from there, we will see that all the big things are nothing more than the accumulation of a bunch of little things. The law forbidding killing is really already contained in the law to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. If we truly love then, we do not have to be commanded not to kill. The thoughts and desire for anger are the seeds of murder. Jesus tells us that the person who is angry with his brother is already guilty of murder in the eyes of God. (*St. Matthew 5:22*) If we strive to control our thoughts and desires, we will soon gain mastery over our words. With the mastery over our thoughts, desires, and words, our physical actions will naturally fall into conformity with our spiritual thoughts and desires.

If we are ashamed to commit various crimes outwardly, we should likewise strive to avoid them in our thoughts and desires (imagination). If we take control of our entertainment and pleasure seeking and put them all in agreement with the commandments of God, we

will soon create a better life for ourselves and, with that, we also create a better world for everyone around us. We need to clean up and apply the laws not only to our actions, but also to our words, desires, and thoughts. We need to reconsider our sources of entertainment and pleasure. Entertainment and pleasure are not evil. These are good and

necessary. What is evil is the kind of entertainment or the source of entertainment.

We don't need additional laws we just need to apply the laws of God to our own lives; both our material lives and our spiritual lives. We must strive to be faithful in little things.
(St. Luke 16:10)



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EXPEDIENCY

Bishop Giles, OFM

The world appears to operate on the idea of expediency. Pontius Pilate's judgment was not guided by truth or reason, but rather expediency. The innocence or guilt of Jesus Christ was not the real question before the human judge. Pilate was faced with a large and politically influential sect. Right or wrong was not the question, but rather what political harm could this sect wield. The mob tells Pilate that if he releases Jesus he will be labeled as not a friend of Caesar. (*St. John 19:12*) We hear Pilate ask the rhetorical question: "What is truth?" (*St. John 18:38*) In the face of these threats, truth takes a back seat to expediency.

In our world today it is more expedient to "legalize" sin rather than punish it because there are too many that would require punishment. Divorce, adultery, fornication, abortion, etc. have been "legalized," permitted or tolerated simply because of the volume of those who are guilty. From this situation, there is an ever-increasing slope in the downward spiral of evil.

Those who condemn the evil are labeled as judgmental and therefore evil. Just as in the time of Christ, good is called evil and evil is called good. Truth is condemned because sin is more popular. This is the rule of the mob rather than the rule of truth and justice.

Many have succumbed to the lie that the majority is always right. Unmitigated democracy is nothing short of mob rule, and the mob is seldom right. In the time of Noe, the majority was evil and deserving of destruction by the Flood. In the time of Lot, the majority in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were evil and were destroyed. In the time of Jesus, we see once again that the majority called out for His Blood and brought forth the destruction of Jerusalem. Too often, we look to elect leaders who will do what we want. Politicians are elected based on the promises that they make. We have yet to see a politician who will promise to do what is right even if his constituency does not like it. Their vows to uphold the constitution only seem to

apply as long as it does not interfere with their chances of being reelected.

The immature are often concerned with what everyone else is doing or what everyone else will think of them. Good parents strive to teach them that it does not matter what everyone else is doing or what everyone else thinks. It is only important what God thinks of us. We must do what God wants of us not what everyone else is doing. Maturity leads us to seek the truth (objective and real) rather than subjective “truth” which is an illusion and a lie.

The devils and the passions of our fallen nature conspire to find reasons and assurances that sin is not only okay but is also good and necessary. We are social creatures and so one of the first arguments is that “everyone else is doing it.” We don’t want to be different or excluded. If we conform to the majority, we don’t have to defend ourselves, we don’t have to stand out like a sore thumb. Conformity with others is expedient and useful in our material world. We are repeatedly asked if or how the majority could be wrong. Or the question is rephrased, “Do

you think you know more than everyone else?” Or “Do you know better than everyone else?” A false sense of humility or shame is designed to get us to consent to evil.

The easiest path to take is to go with this flow. To fight against the flow and row upstream requires a great deal of determination and effort. It is physically much easier to give up and allow ourselves to be carried away with the many on the highway to Hell. The path to Hell is broad and gentle – easy. On the other hand, the path to Heaven is narrow, steep and rocky – hard. When seeking our physical comfort and being unconcerned with what happens at the end of the road we are on, we are readily inclined to take the path of least resistance – the path to Hell.

Choosing the path to Heaven requires much more from us. We must be willing to look beyond the immediate but temporary pleasure or pain and see into the future eternal pleasure or pain. We must have true faith and trust in Jesus Christ that this hard road is the right road, as well as that the easy road is the wrong

one. We must be able to overcome the momentum of the world around us so that we are not carried away into destruction with the world.

We should be very diffident of those who would teach us that Heaven is easy to obtain and that we can get There without any great effort or expense. While this might be a wonderful fancy to entertain, it is far from reality. The many and varied heretics throughout history all “found” (created) an easier way that is much more expedient than the way that Jesus Christ has given us through the Catholic Church. Martin Luther found an easier way than having to examine his conscience, confessing and doing penance. King Henry VIII found an easier way than respecting the law of God in marriage (What God has joined together let no man put asunder.) The Modernist “Catholics” of our own time have found an easier way by changing the “sacraments” so that they are less offensive to the Protestant “faiths.” All of these more “efficient” and “easier” ways are the same way that leads to Hell.

Jesus made it very clear that no one goes to the Father but

the Son and those whom the Son brings to the Father. Parable after parable, Jesus tells us that we must watch and pray, we must work and be vigilant. Finally, He tells us that we must “deny ourselves and take up our daily cross and follow Him.” (*St. Matthew 16:24*) This is to follow Him in penance and sacrifice – follow Him in dying to this world so that we may live eternally in Heaven.

It is true that we are told that there is only one thing that is necessary -- that we love. St. Augustine says: “Love and then do what you will.” What many fail to observe is that loving demands self-sacrifice or self-denial. As we look to understand “love” we see that St. John (*1 John 4:8*) defines love very simply – God is love. Jesus is God; therefore, we may rightly conclude that Jesus is love. Jesus tells us that there is no greater love than to lay down our lives through love. (*John 15:13*) The crucifix is the emblem of love. The crucifix is not an easy path, but it is the best and only path to Heaven.

The expediency of the world ends in disaster, but the cross when embraced willingly and

lovingly in conformity with the Will and Love of God becomes truly expedient. Jesus promises us that He will make our crosses light and sweet. (*St. Matthew 11:28-30*) True love does not count the cost, but rather thinks that every

difficulty or burden is little compared with the joy that is to be obtained through overcoming them. This path of self-denial and sacrifice leads most directly and quickly to our true goal of eternal happiness in Heaven.



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PENANCE AND SUFFERING

Father Joseph Noonan, OFM

One of the prominent effects of the Fall of Man is suffering. Suffering comes to a person in a number of different ways. There is physical suffering, spiritual suffering, mental suffering, and psychological suffering. Usually, a person will suffer in more than one way at the same time causing the person's suffering to increase in ways which may not have been expected and certainly not desired.

Physical suffering is the most common form of suffering. It seems that no one is free from this form of suffering. Whether it is the baby who falls while learning to walk or the child who cuts his finger while playing a game, a teenager who breaks a bone while playing a sport or an adult who is injured in an auto accident, physical suffering occurs each day throughout the world.

If a child is taught at an early age to accept this suffering because of his love for Our Lord, it can be of a great help spiritually as he grows into adulthood. No one doubts the pain from suffering, for all, have experienced it in some

form. Perhaps the most positive thing to result from suffering comes when we unite our suffering as well as we are able to the sufferings of Our Lord during His Passion and Death.

A person must truly love Our Lord to be able to unite his sufferings with those of Our Lord. This requires prayer, the establishment of virtue, and most importantly the will or desire to take part in this holy union. This is not easily accomplished when one is in pain. It will require an awareness of the circumstances and the need to super-naturalize the actions, in other words, to offer up the suffering for the love of God.

As difficult as physical suffering is, spiritual suffering is far worse because of the reason for the pain. Sin is the source of spiritual suffering or the pain which the soul experiences from offending God. Not all are aware of this suffering because they do not know about the workings of the soul, or they simply choose to deny or reject the suffering.

Catholics are taught from a young age about sin and the harm it does to the soul. Venial sin causes damage to the soul because all sin offends God and has a corresponding effect. Mortal sin deadens the soul and rids the soul of all sanctifying grace. Only by being absolved in the Sacrament of Penance is the soul restored to life.

The soul is at some degree of peace when it is in the state of grace, but suffers to various degrees when it is stained with sin. During this sinful state, the soul is separated from God, either partly or entirely. It is this separation which causes it to suffer.

A Catholic with a correctly formed conscience will experience a conscience which is in conflict because of the sins committed by the person. This conflict is a part of the spiritual suffering the person has when he has sinned. Because the conscience is a spiritual faculty it is a part of the soul. As a result, when the conscience is in conflict, the soul is in conflict. This conflict, or suffering, is truly the worst type of suffering for any person who understands the spiritual battle which is taking place within that life-giving spirit known as the soul. When these things are properly

understood, then one knows why Holy Mother Church has always encouraged Her sons and daughters to make regular use of the Sacrament of Penance, the Sacrament which restores life to a suffering and sometimes miserable soul.

The second part of this spiritual renewal of grace to the soul is that of penance. Here penance is to be understood as the punishment by which one atones for the sins committed, which is separate and distinct from the Sacrament of Penance.

It is quite clear from the Scriptures that penance was, and still is, the means through which one makes up for his sins. God imposed required penances, particularly fasts, on the Hebrews in the Old Law. Christ fasted on different occasions as a means of spiritual preparation for those events which were about to occur. His acts of penance were not a means of Self-atonement, for Our Lord is God and never sinned. He wished to set an example for men, illustrating a means through which to temper the lower passions and gain greater control of the soul.

The sins of the individual are such that penance is needed throughout the course of the life of the sinner. Holy Mother

Church, as a means of stressing this fact, has set aside a Holy Season for us to contemplate our sinfulness and truly miserable state. The Lenten Season provides us with an excellent time to consider the state of our souls and the means through which we are able to elevate the soul.

Catholics are encouraged to take advantage of this penitential season. One should approach Lent with a positive attitude, having the desire to atone for his sins and having the opportunity to follow the example of Our Lord by performing acts of penance and mortification. In this way, he is able to unite his penances with the sufferings of Our Lord. It is in this spiritual union where Catholics may rejoice at the opportunity to perform these penances.

There are many who desire to do great things in this world.

Usually, they want some degree of acknowledgment from others. Some are satisfied with helping other men. The effort put forth in most cases is endless hours of relentless work, having only the goal of accomplishment in mind.

Far too many Catholics will obey the laws of the Church, doing what is necessary to be a good, practicing Catholic. In itself, this is good and we may not expect much more. Why are we willing to give our natural, human endeavors the greatest possible effort and those spiritual acts of faith and religion the minimum time and determination? It is meant to be a point of consideration and reflection where penance and suffering are concerned. What am I willing to give in return to Our Lord for the many blessings and graces He has so abundantly given to an undeserving soul?

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LUMEN CHRISTI

Father Anthony Lentz, OFM



During the late evening of the Paschal Vigil, the church is in darkness. This signifies that darkness which “covered the whole earth” (Gospel) after Our Lord Christ “gave up His spirit,” while still hanging upon the Cross. It is also the darkness of the tomb into which He was laid. Due to the sobering services of Good Friday, our minds and our hearts are now fixed upon the reality of Christ’s Passion and Death. In our mind’s eye, we see what His Sacred Humanity endured, and we mourn. While mourning we should remember His words, “Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.” Alas, where is our comfort? Then almost instantaneously our sorrow is turned to joy. We hear the celebrant (or the deacon if it is a solemn ceremony) proclaim: “Lumen Christi” – the Light of Christ!

Then immediately the choir expresses this joy with the words: “Deo Gratias” – “Thanks be to God.” Now with our eyes turned towards the priest, we see the light of the Paschal candle shining. Its light represents that Light which the “darkness did not comprehend.” The Light which enlightens all men - Light of Christ, our Redemption. What an august reality! With the liturgical ceremonies surrounding the Paschal Candle, Holy Mother the Church brings to our minds three fundamental truths of our Faith. The dogmas of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption.

Prior to the lighting of the Paschal candle, we have the Blessing of the Paschal Fire. Immediately after the celebrant and his ministers arrive at the vestibule of the church,

the fire is blessed with a single prayer. It is then sprinkled with holy water and incensed. The origin of this blessing might have been taken from the Celtic practice of the blessing of fire at the beginning of the vernal season (spring). If this is true, it is just another example of how the Church Christianized these practices. The Paschal fire has a greater significance than merely a seasonal blessing. It represents the Divinity. How so? Because fire may be the one substance in nature that can help us understand, though quite imperfectly, the eternal procession of the Godhead. We know from revelation that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son by an eternal procession called spiration; the Son proceeds from the Father by eternal generation, and the Father proceeds from no one for He is the fountainhead of the Trinity. This by no means makes the Father greater because all Three Person share the One and the same Divine Essence. The great Abbé Dom Prosper Guéranger in his masterful work *Explanation of the Prayers and Ceremonies of Holy Mass* touches upon this very point while examining the

words in the Credo, “*born of the Father before all ages.*” He explains it thus: “*But still, how can the Son be the same Substance as the Father, without this Substance becoming thereby exhausted? St. Athanasius, speaking on this subject, gives us the following comparison, which, although material, enables us, in some measure, to seize this Truth. In the same manner, says he, as a torch lighted from another of the same substance, in no way lessens that from which it is lighted, so also the Son of God, taking the Substance of the Father, in no way diminishes this Divine Substance which He shares with Him; for He is in very deed, God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God.*” Of course, this same principle can be applied to the procession of the Holy Ghost.

While the Paschal Fire represents the Divinity, the Paschal Candle represents the Hypostatic Union of the Divinity with the sacred humanity of Christ. Here we relive the Incarnation!

Let us follow the preparatory ceremony of the Paschal Candle as explained in Rev. Walter J.

Schmitz's book *Holy Week Manual*: "*The celebrant incises the paschal candle with a stylus, cutting in it a cross, the Alpha (A) and the Omega (Ω), and the numerals for the current year. Then the celebrant blesses the five wax nails and grains of incense and inserts them in the paschal candle saying the accompanying words. The paschal candle is lighted from the fire just blessed.*"

Now that we understand the rubrics surrounding the Paschal Candle, let us delve into its deeper symbolism. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1908 edition) explains: "*In the virgin wax (of the Paschal Candle) a later symbolism recognized the most pure flesh which Christ derived from His blessed Mother, in the wick the human soul of Christ, and in the flame the divinity of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Moreover, the five grains of incense set cross-wise in the candle recalled the sacred wounds retained in Christ's glorified body and the lighting of the candle with new fire itself served as a lively image of the resurrection.*"

Notice how much care is taken in preparing the candle, this reflects the care and mercy

which God had for fallen man by sending to us His beloved Son! What a marvelous analogy!

We now return where we began, the "Lumen Christi." The celebrant chants this phrase twice more stopping each time while moving closer to the sanctuary. When he stops the servers take smaller candles and they light them from the Paschal Candle. Then the servers while moving forward, with the celebrant, light the individual candles held by all the members of the congregation. By the time the celebrant reaches the sanctuary, the whole Church is filled with light from many candles. The celebrant places the Paschal candle on a stand and soon after begins to chant the ancient song of praise, the *Exultet*. If we meditate on the ceremony that we just explained, we should see symbolized the dogma of the Redemption. If the Paschal Fire represents the Divinity and the Paschal Candle represents the unity of this Divinity with Christ's humanity, then the various lighted candles held by the faithful represent our new life of grace through Baptism! The Catholic

Encyclopedia explains further: *“Whether consciously designed for that purpose or not, the paschal candle typified Jesus Christ, ‘the true light which enlightens every man that comes into this world’, surrounded by His illuminated, i.e. newly baptized disciples, each holding a smaller light.”* So, these candles represent our sharing in the Divine Life of grace, through Baptism! This is why later in the evening we renew our Baptismal Vows.

Now you can see how the Paschal Candle is not merely the subject of a beautiful ceremony, but that it represents Our Risen Savior and our faith in Him. He gave us life, He gave us hope! A true hope that if we follow Him through His Passion, the trials of this valley of tears, we will also get to share in His Resurrection and the joys of Heaven.

I will end this article with the *Exultet*. In this prayer, the priest, or deacon, invites all to share in the joys of Easter by singing the glories and mercies of God. A Blessed Easter to you all!

“Now let the Angelic hosts of heaven, let the Divine Mysteries exult! And let the trumpet of salvation sound forth the victory of so great a King! Let the earth also, illuminate by rays of such brilliancy, be glad; and feel that the splendor of the Eternal King in which she is flooded, hath chased away darkness from the whole world. Let the Church also, our Mother, rejoice, adorned with the brightness of so great a light; and let this temple resound with the triumphant voices of the people. Wherefore, dearly beloved brethren, that stand by in the wondrous clearness of this holy light, join with me, I beseech you, in calling upon the mercy of God Almighty: that He Who hath been pleased, without any merit of mine, to admit me into the number of the Levites, may by imparting to me some of the brightness of His light, enable me to sing fittingly the praises of this Candle. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ His Son, Who with Him lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Ghost God, world without end. Amen.”

EASTER CUSTOMS

Brother Charles, TOSF

I would like to pose a question. How important is Easter to our children? How does it compare to Christmas, birthdays or even (God forbid) Halloween? I recently had a conversation with a non-Catholic friend about this. I was told how much of a bother it was to make time for family or even some kind of church attendance on that day. (With anonymity intact, I might point out, this same individual happily shared the festivities he arranged on Super Bowl Sunday, but I digress.)

It seems that, even on the worldly side, Easter has fallen off. Sure, every big box store will overstock on Easter baskets, candy and such, and the people will spend money, and the children will get sick on jelly beans. All this and more will still happen, but it will be at the behest of the candy and toy companies, and not the faith.

Keeping Christ in Christmas is a little easier since He is mentioned in the very name of the feast. Keeping Christ in

Easter is a lot harder when many celebrate “candy Easter” but might have trouble remembering the story of the first Easter morning, not to mention what happened on the previous Friday. We, of course, know better. It is easy to assume that our children know the true meaning of Easter. But, the unceasing pull of the worldly influence require us to go to greater lengths to be sure. One way is to make time, as a family, for some of our Catholic traditions. Here are just a few:

Easter Eggs – decorating eggs on Holy Saturday has been a tradition for centuries. This is done on Holy Saturday because that is when Jesus was in the Sepulcher. The egg symbolizes the tomb and also the renewal of life. In past ages, eating the decorated eggs had more significance. They were blessed at the Easter Vigil Mass and eaten at the Sunday breakfast feast. These were the first eggs the faithful had eaten for weeks. At that time, they abstained from meat

during Lent, and also all animal products, including milk, cheese, and eggs. The candy eggs came much later, but even these can be enjoyed with the proper significance.

Easter Baskets – it is a tradition in many European households, to present a basket of food on Easter Sunday to be blessed. These might contain eggs and treats, fruits and vegetables, even the meat and bread for Easter dinner. In some parishes, these baskets are blessed after the Mass on Easter Sunday.

Spring Cleaning – another custom, especially in Europe was cleaning the house after winter. They had to deal with coal dust and wood smoke, of course, but it was a practice for the whole family to clean the house on Holy Thursday. This way, they were ready to devote their time and attention to the solemn liturgies of the following days.

This brings us to the most important way we can show our children the importance of Easter. If possible, as a family, try to attend the Holy Week Liturgies. I know for many, distance plays a big factor in doing so. However, there are

ways to participate without being physically present. On Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, block off some time throughout the day to reflect on the significance of these days because without the events of these three days, we would not have the Feast of the Resurrection to celebrate. You could try reciting the Stations of the Cross, say The Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, read The Passion of Our Lord, etc. On Good Friday, between the hours of noon and three, you could try to be as quiet as possible. We know this can be especially challenging with little children but even avoiding unnecessary noise such as the television, radio or computer can help.

One other way to make sure Easter is well understood, is to have a good and profitable Lent. The glory of Easter can only be reflected in the souls of those who purify themselves during Lent. The amount of light that shines through a window is directly proportionate to how clean the window is. Christ, the Light of the World, cannot fully manifest Himself in a soul that is soiled by sin. Owing to

personal experience, I can say that the most joyous Easters are preceded by the most faithfully penitential Lents.

Since the idea of self-mortification is directly opposed by the world, we may have to go to great lengths to train our children in this practice. This training begins with example. This is a must. No adult can match a child's ability to detect hypocrisy or double standards. Just

remember, as in all things, start slow and be consistent. There's no need to go from no penance to bread and water fasting.

Caring for the spiritual welfare of another is the hardest uphill battle there is. As parents, you have to fight this battle every day, and fight it hard. Perhaps we can resolve to restore Easter to its rightful place in our world.



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ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

An Autobiography

CHAPTER ONE EARLIEST MEMORIES

Continued

I remember also the great affection I had for my dear god-mother,¹ who had just left school. Without appearing to do so, I took in all that I saw and heard, and it seems to me that I judged of things then as I judge of them now. I listened attentively while she taught Celine, and I was very good and obedient so as to obtain the privilege of remaining in the room during lessons. Marie loaded me with little presents which, trifling though they were, afforded me endless pleasure. I was proud of my two big sisters, and thought of you from morning till night, you seemed so far away. When I was just learning to talk, Mamma would ask me: "What are you thinking about?" and the invariable answer was: "Pauline." Sometimes I heard it said that you would be a nun,

and without quite understanding what that meant I used to think: "I too will be a nun." This is one of my earliest recollections, and I have never changed my mind; so, you see, when I was only two years old, it was your example that drew me to the Divine Spouse of virgins. What tender memories I could here confide to you, were I not afraid of being carried too far!

Dear Leonie, also had a warm place in my heart and my great love for her was fully returned. In the evening, when she came from school, she used to take care of me while everyone else went for a walk, and it seems as though I can still hear the sweet songs, she sang to lull me to sleep. I remember perfectly the day of her First Communion, and I remember her companion, the poor child whom Mamma dressed, according to the touching custom of the well-to-do families in Alenon. This child did not leave Leonie throughout all that happy day,

¹ Her eldest sister, Marie Louise, educated at the Visitation Convent of Le Mans. (Rev. Thomas N. Taylor, Editor)

and at the grand dinner in the evening she sat in the place of honour. I was too small to stay up for the feast, but, thanks to Papa's goodness, I had my share in it, for when the dessert came round, he himself brought his little Queen a piece of the First Communion cake.

The only one now left to speak of is Celine, the companion of my childhood. My memories of her are so abundant that I do not know how to choose. We understood each other perfectly, though I was much the more forward and livelier, and by far the less simple of the two. Here is a letter which will show you, dear Mother, how much sweeter Celine was than naughty Therese. I was then nearly three, and Celine six and a half.

"Celine is naturally inclined to be good; as to that little puss, Therese, one cannot tell how she will turn out, she is still so young and thoughtless. She is a very intelligent child but has not nearly so sweet a disposition as her sister, and her stubbornness is almost unconquerable. When she has said 'No,' nothing will make her change; you might leave her all day in the cellar without getting her to say 'Yes.' She would rather sleep there than do so."

I had another fault, that of strong self-love, which Mamma did not mention in her letters. Here are a couple of instances: One day, wishing no doubt to see how far my pride would go, she said, smiling: "Therese, if you will kiss the ground, I will give you a halfpenny." In those days the sum was a fortune, and in order to gain it I had not far to stoop, for I was so tiny that there was not much distance between my lips and the ground; but my pride was up in arms, and, holding myself erect, I replied: "No, thank you, Mamma, I would rather go without the halfpenny."

Another time when we were going into the country to see some friends, Mamma told Marie to put on my prettiest frock, but not to let me have bare arms. I did not utter a word and appeared as indifferent as children of that age should be, but in my own mind I said: "I should have looked much prettier with bare arms."

To Be Continued.....



A Prayer for Those Who Live Alone

I live alone, dear Lord,
Stay by my side,
In all my daily needs
Be Thou my guide.
Grant me good health,
For that indeed, I pray,
To carry on my work,
From day to day.
Keep pure my mind,
My thoughts, my every deed,
Let me be kind, unselfish
In my neighbor's need.
Spare me from fire, from flood,
Malicious tongues,
From thieves, from fear,
And evil ones.
If sickness or an accident befall,
Then humbly Lord, I pray,
Hear Thou my call.
And when I'm feeling low,
Or in despair,
Lift up my heart
And help me in prayer.
I live alone, dear Lord,
Yet have no fear,
Because I feel **Your Presence**
Ever near. Amen.

Invocation to St. Therese

O Little Flower of Jesus, ever consoling troubled souls with heavenly graces, in your unfailing intercession I place my confident trust. From the Heart of Our Blessed Savior petition these blessings of which I stand in greatest need (mention here). Shower upon me your promised roses of virtue and grace, dear St. Therese so that swiftly advancing in sanctity and in perfect love of neighbor, I may someday receive the crown of life eternal. Amen.



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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 7

TO THE GIFT OF THE SOUL, GOD RESPONDS BY GIVING HIMSELF

At each instant, the Will of God is manifested to the soul in the form of a duty to be done, an evil to be avoided, a cross to be carried; and at each moment of the day, the soul responds by an act of acceptance, by a loving gift of self to God.

In this single act the Creator and the creature meet and embrace. The soul gives itself entirely to God; and in His turn, God gives Himself without reserve. Each event inspires the soul to renew this act; each little suffering draws this act, like a precious oil, from the



heart. And, each time, God responds by greater love and greater generosity. It is a continual flux and reflux which fills the fountain of love and, at last, causes it to overflow.

My soul, rise above the brink of thy narrow banks and flow into God. This great God, this Ocean unfathomed and limitless, will in turn over-flow and will fill thee. The three august Persons will establish in thee Their dwelling and will hold in thee Their council of love.

One look of thine has ravished the Heart of God and forced Him to come down to thee. Thou hast murmured a humble act of love; and lo! All Heaven is set in motion toward thee!

Lo! God Himself has no repose until He is given to thee! He could await eternity to load thee with His favors; but His Love will know no delay. He hastens to surrender Himself to thee.

O my God! When I see such eagerness, it seems to me that Thou hast need of my love; it seems that, in the midst of Thine infinite happiness, Thou dost feel alone and isolated without Thy little creature. It delights Thee to feel my heart beating close to Thine, to let Thy Divine Eyes meet mine, to feel Thyself locked in my arms, and to hear Thyself called: "My Father!" Thy Heart desires to love and to feel Itself loved immeasurably.

O my soul! Let thyself be loved by thy God; let thyself be loaded with His favors. Thy life passes in the Bosom of God. The Three Persons are always within thee, occupied with thee. Give thyself to Them, surrender thyself to Their Will and Their Love. The Father created me and He sustains me; the Son redeemed me, and He purifies me; the Holy Spirit guides me and sanctifies me.

The Father carries me by His Power; the Son enlightens me

by His Wisdom; the Holy Spirit enriches me by His Goodness.

O Father! O Son! O Holy Ghost! Blessed Trinity! Source of life, truth, and love, reign over me! At Thy touch, my nothingness thrills with life and wellbeing, my darkness is illumined, and my frozen heart warms and dilates.

If solitude should be my lot, I shall no longer fear it. I am in the company of the most tender Father, the most loving Brother, the most devoted Spouse. I have matter of conversation to occupy centuries spent with Them.

Though sadness may come, though my soul may be overwhelmed with homesickness for Heaven, I shall dread this no longer. I have within myself the source of joy; I have Heaven within me. Why should I envy the angels and the saints? I am able to love God, to love Him forever and without interruption. And is not love Heaven?

ARTICLE 8

THE GIFT OF ONESELF INCLUDES THE PRACTICE OF ALL THE VIRTUES

The act of giving oneself attracts God to the soul, and

with Him all the treasures of Heaven. The same act delivers to God the whole man, body and soul, all their powers and all their actions.

This act of abandonment having once been made, the soul has nothing more to give; and, provided the act is always maintained, God has nothing more to ask of the soul. This very simple act is the exercise of the highest virtues in an eminent degree.

It is a very intense act of Faith. The soul delivers herself to God without reserve and without recall. She believes that He is her sovereign Master, her Redeemer, her Sanctifier. She has faith in His Omnipotence, Wisdom, and Goodness.

It is an act of absolute Hope in God. Giving herself to Him, placing in His Hands all her cares, forgetting her own needs, she manifests a limitless confidence in Him to Whom she yields herself. Like Abraham, she is ready at every moment to sacrifice to Him whatever she holds most dear. Like him, she knows that God saves and repairs all when all seems lost.

The gift of oneself is an act of perfect Love. It is indeed

essentially love. It is love which dictates it, formulates it, constitutes its purity and its merit; it is love which gives it intensity.

Oh, what is the life of a soul surrendered to God! Like the seraphim in Heaven, she does naught but love. Love is her raiment, her food, her very breath. How terrible to hell is this soul, this heart which casts forth flames of love!

The giving of oneself is the practice of all the other virtues. Without being attached to any in particular, the soul which yields herself to God is ready at every moment to exercise all of them; and whenever God requires it, she practices them generously. She is humble, knowing well that when she has given all to God, she is still an unprofitable servant. She is mortified, gaily embracing all the crosses that Jesus presents to her. She is pure, living upon earth according to her state, free from all attachment to earthly pleasures. She is zealous, consecrating all the moments of her life to the glory of God and the honor of His Name. She is generous, having forgotten self once for all; and, completely surrendering herself at every moment, she thinks only of the interests of Jesus.

By the single act of self-surrender, the soul practices all the virtues; she yields herself to God, with all that she possesses and may yet possess.

Thus our good Master has included all perfection in one single act: the gift of oneself at the present moment. This self-surrender is the meeting of God and the soul in an ineffable embrace; it is an uninterrupted communion; it is the highest perfection to which human weakness can aspire.

It was by self-surrender that sanctity was attained by all the just who lived upon earth before the time of Christ. They did not have human knowledge of holiness; they had no spiritual books to help them to acquire it; but the inspiration of the Holy Spirit supplied for all.

It was by self-surrender that sanctity was attained by countless souls who appeared upon earth since the coming of Our Savior: apostles, martyrs, virgins, confessors, and that immense army of men and women saints whom the world knows not, but whose virtues

Heaven venerates and glorifies. In the great diversity of attractions, lights, inspirations and graces with which God favored them, one thing never varied; and that was love.

Again, it is by self-surrender that sanctity is being attained by the chosen souls whom Jesus now possesses upon earth. For the most part unknown to men, known to God alone, in obscurity and retirement, they are allowing the likeness of Christ to be formed in them.

Their life is simple and great, lifted above the cares of earth, removed from the noise and confusion of the world. They tranquilly enjoy their God; and God is pleased to work wonders in them. Who shall tell us of these wonders? Let us leave the secret to God and to the souls who are their happy recipients. It is not the knowledge of God's masterpieces that will make us holy; it is the act of love incessantly repeated in the depths of the soul.

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FRANCISCAN SAINTS

APRIL 3RD

Blessed Gandolph of Binasco

Confessor, First Order

This blessed man was born in the little town of Binasco in Lombardy. He renounced the vanities of the world in the flower of his youth in order to become a religious of the Order of St. Francis. This was in the lifetime of the holy Founder. He was remarkable for his deep humility, his great love of prayer, and his boundless zeal for the salvation of souls. His reputation for sanctity was widespread in Sicily. His life was one of continual penance and rigorous abstinence. Besides the fasts enjoined by the rule, he fasted three days in the week on bread and water. His only tunic was a hair shirt. He spent whole nights in prayer and was often rapt in ecstasy. Such was his love of humility and his horror of the praise of men that, on learning that his brethren spoke in terms of admiration of his virtue, he

determined to withdraw to a solitary place in order to escape the temptation to vanity.

Taking with him Brother Paschal, who shared his taste for solitude, they set out together for the wild and rugged mountains of Petralia. On their way they stopped at Polizzi. The people, hearing of their arrival, compelled Gandolph to stay and preach the Lenten course in that town. A few days later, Brother Paschal fell ill and lost his speech before he could make his confession. He remained in this sad condition for five days, during which time he frequently made signs to Gandolph with his eyes and hands, as if to implore his help. When he seemed to be at the point of death Gandolph, moved with compassion at his dear brother's affliction, betook

himself to prayer, begging God to make known to him what the dying man desired. He had scarcely ended his prayer, when the dying man recovered his speech and said: "I thank God and you, my Father, because through your intercession I have been delivered from hell. Through negligence, I had omitted to confess certain sins, for which the devil was about to lay hold of me, and he would have dragged me down to hell but for your charitable aid." He then made a most contrite confession and died in great peace.

In his sermons, Brother Gandolph, spoke with such burning zeal as to inspire his hearers with true devotion, while at the same time he taught them the practice of virtue. One Wednesday in Holy Week in the year 1260, while he was preaching in the church at Polizzi, he told his hearers that this would be his last sermon. On his return to the hospital of St. Nicholas, where he lodged, he fell sick and prepared himself for death. On Holy Saturday he told those who were attending him that he would not see the next day dawn. And so, it was.

At the moment of his death, all the bells in Polizzi rang out of their own accord. His body diffused a marvelously sweet fragrance, which perfumed the whole house and lasted for a fortnight. The clergy and the people of Polizzi assisted at his funeral, and he was buried in the beloved solitude which he had chosen for himself.

Many miracles occurred after his death. When his body had been buried about sixty years, it was decided to remove it to a more honorable resting-place. The exact spot where he had been buried was not known, but God pointed it out to the workmen in a miraculous manner. The body was found whole and incorrupt and was then exposed to public veneration. God again honored it with many miracles, which made the name of Blessed Gandolph famed throughout Sicily. Pope Leo XIII confirmed the devotion which has been paid to him from the beginning.

ON THE PLEASURES OF THE WORLD

Consider the vanity of worldly pleasures. St. John says in his *Epistle (1, 2:17)*: "The world passeth away and the

concupiscence thereof.” A casket and a shroud are all that remain to us of its splendor. Hence there is much truth in the words that there is little happiness behind high windows and beautiful curtains. Worldly pleasures are like poisoned honey which we swallow with relish, to experience thereafter the excruciating pains of worry, envy, spite, and anger. How wisely, therefore, did Blessed Gandolph act when he disengaged himself from these pleasures. — Have you allowed yourself to be deluded by the pleasures of the world? Have you perhaps envied others on their account?

Consider the dangers associated with worldly pleasures. “For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). The number of those who suffer no harm in the midst of the pleasures of the world is very small. Again, how wise it was of Blessed Gandolph to renounce the pleasures of the world and so to guard his soul from much harm. — Have worldly pleasures perhaps been an

occasion of sin for you in the past?

A rich recompense awaits those who renounce worldly pleasures. When St. Peter asked Our Lord what he and the other apostles would receive because they had left all things, he was given this promise: “Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration shall sit upon twelve seats (thrones)” (Matth. 19:28). Even here on earth Our Lord gives those who have withdrawn from the world the true joys of the children of God and the peace of a good conscience. — Adhere, therefore, to God, and use the world as though you used it not.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O God, who dost make the hearts of Thy faithful to be of one mind and one will, grant to Thy people to love that which Thou hast commanded and to strive after that which Thou hast promised, so that amid the vicissitudes of this life our hearts may be directed there where true joy is to be found. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

THE GREATEST TREASURE

Reverend L. Chiavarino



CHAPTER V

IN HOLY MASS, JESUS, IN OUR NAME RETURNS THANKS TO GOD FOR THE BLESSINGS WE HAVE RECEIVED

It is narrated in the life of the Venerable Frances Farnese that while she was overcome with sadness because she did not know how to thank God worthily for the graces He had showered upon her, Our Lady appeared to her and after placing the Infant Jesus in her arms said, with a maternal smile: "Take Him, offer Him to God in thanksgiving. He will be able to accomplish what you cannot: God will be satisfied by His thanksgiving."

How can we hope worthily to thank God for the benefits we

have received from Him? All that we are, all that we have comes to us from the infinite goodness of God. He bestowed on us the gift of birth in the Catholic Church, thus setting our feet on the path to heaven. It is He who defends us from the dangers to soul and body which surround us. It is He who daily showers us with blessings, Who gives us health, strength, air, light, the very bread we eat, and all the good things we enjoy. What can we give to God in return for all these benefits? Truly, it is necessary that the Blessed Virgin give us, also, her Divine Child, that we may offer Him, the only acceptable sacrifice, in thanksgiving. This is precisely what happens in the Mass.

O blessed Mass, which every day places Jesus in our hands, as it were. A bright coin of infinite value enabling us abundantly and fully to satisfy the debt of gratitude we owe to Our Heavenly Father, Our Maker, and Preserver.

Dearly beloved, let us open our eyes; let us realize and appreciate this hidden treasure. In our joy let us cry aloud: "O, how great a treasure, how precious and inestimable a treasure, is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

Yet it is not enough to be struck with admiration of this treasure: we must make use of it. Let us attend Mass every day if it is at all possible for us to do so. Let us, above all, assist at Mass with true devotion. How great a benefit do those reject who lie abed, who allow themselves to become wrapped up in worldly cares, who spend their time in useless reading or in gossip, when they might be at Mass!

The distinguished writer, Alessandro Manzoni, was most devoted to the Holy Sacrifice and, even when he had reached an advanced age, he attended Mass every day.

On occasions, however, some of his relatives would attempt to prevent him from going to Church on the plea of his age or of bad weather. One rainy morning he awoke late and, realizing that the hour of Mass had gone by, he summoned his wife and, the other members of his family and inquired:

"Why did you not call me for Mass?"

They urged upon his attention the bad weather and the fact that he needed rest. Manzoni replied:

"Ah, my dear ones, had I won a great money prize which had to be called for this morning you would indeed have aroused me long before the time of departure and despite the bad weather. Let me assure you that the Mass is worth infinitely more than any such prize."

Yes, the Mass is worth more than the richest earthly gain; its worth is measurable only by the worth of God, by the worth of Heaven. For each of us its worth is infinitely increased when we participate in it most fully by the reception of Holy Communion.

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