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THE SERAPH

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Bishop Giles, OFM

Throughout history, the number forty holds a lot of significance in the True Faith. In the days of Noe, it rained for forty days and forty nights. The Israelites spent forty years wandering in the desert when they left Egypt for the Promised Land. Jesus fasted forty days and nights. Our Lenten fast is forty days.

We have found an interesting spiritual significance in this number. There are Ten Commandments with four ways in which we may fail in keeping them (act, word, thought, or omission). We, therefore, have a total of forty various types of offenses against the Law of God (10x4=40). Hence there is a corresponding penitential season of forty days.

THE SERAPH is entering into its 40th year. This issue is number 1 of volume 40. We cannot help but reflect upon the departure of the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. During the journey through the desert, the Israelites were guided by a pillar of light. We see THE SERAPH as such a guide to many souls as they made/make their journey from the various false religions to the promised land of the One, True, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic faith.

Many have or are coming forth from the Modernist Church of the Novus Ordo. When the Israelites entered Egypt they were free but gradually over time, their freedom was taken away and they became slaves. Many Catholics, likewise, gradually gave up on or had the true faith taken from them with the implementation of the liberal agenda of the false Second Council of the Vatican. Leaving the comfort of the false Church and entering the realm of *Sede Vacante* (Without a true pope.) appears very similar to leaving the comfort of Egypt and entering the desert. There is uncertainty, there is sacrifice, there is discomfort. The Israelites were required to hold on to the revelations of God given to them through Moses. In the Church today, we are required to hold on to the faith and traditions preserved and passed on to us from over 2000 years of history.

The Israelites were tempted and many of them offended God by longingly looking back to Egypt and their slavery. In following the True Faith we are likewise tempted to long for the apparent order and comfort of the Novus Ordo or other Protestant faiths. The Israelites left behind houses

in Egypt and lived in temporary structures (tents) during their forty-year pilgrimage. True Catholics must leave the physical buildings of what were once Catholic churches with all their material accouterments and often celebrate the Mass and other sacraments in homes, hotels or other temporary places.

There was much lacking in the desert and there is much lacking in these places of temporary worship. We are frequently reminded that the Church is the Mystical Body rather than wood, bricks, and mortar. The Church is a spiritual and physical Body. She is not defined by buildings, structures, artwork, or riches. These things do not make up the Church, but it is the Church that gives them meaning and value. When God allowed these things to be taken from the Church, they are no longer Hers. Catholics often like to visit these places, but they are little more than historical artifacts of what once was.

We may wonder why God has allowed this to happen but: first, we must accept that God does not have to explain Himself to us; and secondly, we may see this as a punishment for our sins. No matter what, all that happens works for the good of those who love God. God permitted the Ark of the Covenant to be taken away

from the Israelites. He preferred being without a temple for a very long time even after the Israelites reached the Promised Land. The weakness of our human nature easily falls away from loving God to loving the gifts He has given us. Sadly, it seems that the love of magnificent church buildings, artwork, and riches, drew the love of men's hearts away from God. The faith of many became faith in material things rather than in God, His Laws, His revelations to us, and His Mystical Body – the Church. Many find it hard or impossible to leave the buildings they were baptized in, received their First Holy Communion in, were married in, etc. Little do they understand that the building, as important as it was, is not the Church – the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. The Church is not inanimate wood, stone, mortar, and paint. The Church is the living faith of Jesus Christ in the living souls of men. The rituals and ceremonies are the outward expressions of the faith in men's hearts just as the material buildings are outward expressions of this same faith. When in men's hearts the True Faith is lost, the rituals, ceremonies, buildings, etc. all lose their importance or significance.

As the Church is not the buildings, neither is the Church

made up of simply “tradition.” It is not enough for us to walk away from the buildings and hold on to just the traditional rituals and ceremonies. The Latin Mass has been an arguing point for many “Traditionalists,” but what good are these ceremonies if they are empty of the doctrines and belief that brought them into existence? The anarchy brought forth in “Traditionalism” points out very clearly (for those who have eyes to see) the falseness of clinging solely to ritual and ceremony. God is a God of order. The Mystical Body of Jesus Christ is a Church of right order. Order is essential, but order demands obedience and self-denial. If we look at the life of Jesus, we see that He came to obey – He came to do the Will of His Father in Heaven; we see that He teaches self-denial – He says if we are to be His disciples we must deny ourselves and daily take up our cross and follow Him. The Church has a hierarchy and demands submission and obedience from the laity. “Traditionalism” has completely inverted this order and has the laity giving orders to the supposed “hierarchy.” Traditional priests answer to laymen who hold some material control over their physical lives (simony), and Traditional bishops are expected to listen to and obey the priests and the laity – the laity direct and run the church like Protestants.

A third trap that ensnares many is doctrine. Doctrine is the teaching of God through the Catholic Church. With all teachings, a living teacher is required to obtain a true understanding and application of the doctrine. Many “Traditionalists” have become self-appointed theological doctors of the Church. These differ very little from Protestants in their “private interpretations of Scripture.” We, therefore, find many opposed and conflicting “doctrinal teachings” among the various “Traditionalists.” As with the Protestant Preachers, we find many “Traditionalist” priests preaching what the people want to hear rather than what needs to be said. They have allowed themselves to be bought and paid for. The tail is wagging the dog.

We have seen “pious” laypeople instructing “priests and bishops” what to believe, what to say, etc. They imagine that the Holy Ghost is speaking through and teaching the Church through certain laymen or women. Bishops are now asked to ordain this one or make this one a bishop regardless of worthiness, preparation or training – often assuming that God will fill in all that is lacking. This presumption obviously leads to chaos. God expects us to act with prudence, wisdom, and intelligence. St. Paul warns bishops not to impose hands lightly. The clerical

candidates for the priesthood should be trained, tested, and proven at each stage of their development and advancement. Obviously rejecting all that are unfit or unworthy.

The laity need to be associated with and obedient to a pastor (priest), that pastor, and the laity with him, need to be subject to a true bishop (a successor to the Apostles). Ideally, all the bishops are united with the unifying visible vicar of Jesus Christ (a true pope). In the absence of a true pope, the true bishops must work together in shepherding the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant in Heaven. There are no headless laity or priests in the True Church. They must all be united to a true bishop. It is not the laity's place to direct the bishops. They may present thoughts and even suggestions, but it is the bishop who must make the decision and lead. He is the one that is guided by the Holy Ghost and is given the authority of Jesus Christ through the Apostolic succession.

Many ask why the "Traditional" bishops will not work together. We see in this a continuation of the demonic inversion of right order. Since "Traditionalism" is based upon a ground upward ideology, there is division in the laity over the most basic understanding of the Church, Her

doctrines, laws, rituals, and practices. This anarchy is elevated to the many "Traditionalists priests;" and obviously, this poisons what would be the top of this chaos the bishopric. We must remember that the True Church does not develop from the ground up as man-made things do – the Church comes from the top down.

As a true Roman Catholic bishop, we cannot unite with those who's clerical orders stem from heretical or schismatic origins. Nor can we unite with those who have clerical orders that are rendered doubtful, at best, due to Masonic/Satanic connections. In the Church, the sacraments and especially, the Sacrament of Orders, must be both valid and licit. There are valid orders that are illicit and these stem from the many schismatic sects. There are many invalid or doubtfully valid orders from sects that have made themselves heretical. It does not matter how well these men may speak; or how well they observe ritual and ceremony; it does not matter how intelligent they may be, nor is it a question of personality. If they do not have true Catholic orders, there is no union possible with them. There cannot be any compromise in this because this would be a denial of the True Faith.

It has been suggested that all the “bishops” should come together and “conditionally” re-ordain each other in the priesthood and bishopric. Thus, mixing and assuring that they all have valid orders. This would indeed assure that all would have valid orders, but it would also assure that all would be excommunicated or at best accomplices in the heresies and schisms of the others. This differs very little from Pantheism or liberal Protestantism or even Ecumenical Modernism. The Sacrament of Holy Orders, like Baptism and Confirmation, imprints an indelible mark upon the soul. It is a grave sin to attempt to re-imprint this mark where it already exists. To do so is to deny the indelible character of the sacrament. With the denial of the indelible character, comes the denial of the doctrine, with the denial of the doctrine comes the denial of the faith ... While this may sound good on the surface it is a sure way to further destruction. The purity of the Faith, Doctrine, Traditions, Sacraments and Right Order (hierarchy) is essential and must be preserved even if the number of members of the Church Militant decreases.

Perhaps an analogy will help. Suppose we have some good stock of pure Thoroughbred horses, that we wish to continue.

Our neighbor has some of the finest donkeys. Our horses are of no value to our neighbor, nor are his donkeys of any value to us. Yes, we could interbreed them and we would both have more equal animals – sharing in the ancestry of both herds. These crosses may be better work animals, but they lead to a dead end as they are sterile mules.

Or we may consider a dairy that has one container of milk that is contaminated with an unacceptable count of bacteria and another container of milk that is very pure. By mixing the two containers, the bacteria is diluted and may become temporarily acceptable, meeting minimal standards. However, the pure milk is now polluted. The price for an increase in quantity is a decrease in purity. And we understand that it will not take the bacteria long to reproduce and render it all bad.

Polluting the True Faith with heresies and schisms does not build it up but rather, destroys it. We must reject all heresies and schisms. There is no association or compromise permitted. With the True Faith, we must believe all that the Church teaches because it is God teaching us through Her. Likewise, we must reject all the false teachings of other religions. We must do this and continue to do this, even if

we are thus rendered alone and despised by the rest of this world as Job was. God is interested in quality rather than quantity. It may look like it would help to give in to compromise in doctrine, but ultimately it would only accomplish total destruction.

We have embarked into the desert of this life when we accepted that the Chair of Peter is vacant and that the Vatican II Church (Novus Ordo) is a false church. We have not been abandoned. God has given us true successors to the Apostles to lead us; THE SERAPH has been an instrument in their hands. We clearly see the invalidity of the Modernist clerical orders with the implementation of the new rite of ordination. We have left the slavery of Egypt, but have not left God, and He has not left us. The devils have however never stopped seeking to create disorder and chaos, by making false Catholics, false priests, and

false bishops both within and without of “Tradition.” Let us not look back longingly upon the “fleshpots of Egypt,” nor let us enter into Core’s¹ rebellion against God’s representatives. We must always be true to Jesus and His Bride – the Mystical Body of Christ. This means holding true to the Faith; true to the Doctrines; true to the traditional rituals, ceremonies, and customs; and just as importantly, we must hold true to the right order of Apostolic Succession (hierarchy). The Church is known and recognized by Her four marks: She is One, She is Holy, She is Catholic, and She is Apostolic.

May God continue to guide the shepherds He has sent, so that they, and all who will hear the voice of Jesus through them, may one day enter into the eternal Promised Land of Heaven.

¹*This refers to the rebellion against Moses & Aaron in the Book of Numbers: Chapters 16 & 26*

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SPEAK LORD, THY SERVANT IS LISTENING

Bishop Giles, OFM

Our lives are often filled with a lot of commotion. We have deadlines to meet and many things that need to be done. It is often said that there are not enough hours in the day. We knowingly or unknowingly adapt and become “multi-taskers” – trying to accomplish several things at the same time. Perhaps in some situations, this works out, but in many, it does not. Some things demand our full attention if we are to do them well.

Formal prayer is one of those things that demand our attention. St. Paul would have us pray always and to pray without ceasing. We can accomplish this by offering to God whatever it is we are doing. If we are eating, let us eat for the love of God. If we are fasting, let us fast for the love of God. In this type of prayer, we make a simple intention or dedication of our labors and then focus our attention upon the task at hand. Even though we are not constantly thinking of God, it is an acceptable and pleasing

offering that we are making to Him. However, when it is time for our formal prayers, we should set aside our thoughts and concerns of worldly things so that we can give our full attention to what we are doing. We want to avoid the reproach of God: “These people worship Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.”

We should strive to prepare ourselves before we begin these types of formal prayers. We can call upon our Guardian Angels, Patron Saints, etc. for their intercession and aid in praying well. Then, we should try as best as we can to divest ourselves of the worldly thoughts and concerns so that we can give our full attention to the prayers that we are about to make.

There will be distractions from time to time, even when we put forth our best efforts to avoid them. We should not become discouraged or disheartened. We should simply set them aside and begin again taking up where we left off. The goal is not to accomplish

a certain amount, but rather to do as best we can in every circumstance. It is in the struggle that we "fight the good fight." We were made soldiers of Christ in the Sacrament of Confirmation, and a soldier's duty is to fight. We should not lose courage when we are frequently called upon to fight against troubles and distractions in our spiritual lives.

When we lift up our hearts to God in all the various manners of prayer, we should leave some time of quiet so that we may listen. We often forget that prayer works in two ways. If we are doing all the talking and never listening then there is no real communication or useful prayer. God often speaks to us in the quiet of our souls, but that requires that from time to time there is peace, stillness, and quiet in our hearts and minds. It appears that frequently we ask God to show us His Will, but then we never stop to listen to Him, and hence we miss all that He has to tell us.

Don't kill the messenger.

God often reveals His Will to us through others, or through situations or circumstances. In

the quiet times of our reflections and prayers, we can find God's Will revealed to us. When we reflect that "all things work for the good of those who love God," we see that there is no real evil in this world – it is all good. The crosses and burdens of this life have been sent to us by a loving Father in Heaven. His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, instructs us and gives us the example to follow when He invites us to be His disciples. "Deny yourself, take up your cross daily and come follow Me." This daily self-denial and cross is necessary for us and is, therefore, the Will of God. It is how we can unite with Jesus. It is how we can make reparation for our sins. It is how we gain merit for Heaven.

Frequently when we pray, we beg God to take these crosses away from us. We fail to realize that it is God's Will that we carry them, we fail to realize that it is God Who has sent them. We ask God to remove them, and when they are not removed we think our prayers are not heard by God, or that it is useless to pray, and we are even tempted to foolishly think that there is no

God. God has answered our prayers with a resounding “no” but we are not listening because that is not what we want to hear. We keep jabbering on, making so much noise in our hearts and minds, that we can not hear Him. Jesus gave us an example when He prayed in the Garden of Olives, asking if it were possible that His cross would be taken away, but then added: *“Not My Will but Thine be done.”*

Our most painful crosses are often the very people we love the most. A man's worst enemies are often those of his own household. Those who are closest to us – nearest and dearest – cause us the greatest pain and suffering. An outside enemy can never hurt us as deeply as our loved ones can. This often leads to breaking up of marriages and families, because we fail to embrace this cross for the Love of God and in imitation of Jesus.

Jesus would have us love our enemies and to do good to them. When they curse us we should bless them; when they hurt us we should forgive them. We should avoid rendering evil for evil or tit for

tit. On the contrary, we should always do good no matter what evil we receive. This is the teaching and example that Jesus has given us. This is the Will of God.

Our enemies are actually our greatest benefactors. They supply us with the opportunity to practice patience, long-suffering, etc. It is through them that we can follow Jesus. Far from hating them for the evil they do to us, we should love them all the more, because the apparent evil they intend is a real good for us. Because they are doing real good to us, we should pray for them, begging God not to punish them for their sins. Their sins are made into spiritual treasures for us. Jesus prayed on the Cross: “Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.” St. Stephen prayed, “Lord, lay not this charge against them.”

Judging that sin is a sin is no more wrong than judging that a car is a car. It is an objective fact. Condemning the sinner is not our job but belongs in the province of the Divine.

We should not make the mistake of thinking that there are no sins because all things

are turned into good. The only real evil is sin. The world will tell us that we should not judge. This is not the Will of God. God's will is shown us in the fact that He has given us the faculties of our souls (memory, intellect, and will) and Laws to live by. We must learn the law and discern transgressions of the Law from true obedience to the Law. This is judging and this is good and necessary. What we should strive to avoid is condemning others. This condemning "judgment" is reserved to God because only He can discern the hidden intentions and motions of men's hearts, minds and souls. We must remember Our Lord's words: *"Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."*

We should be able to discern sin first in ourselves, and then in those around us. We must judge and condemn the sin within us – resolving to amend and do better. We should judge the sin in others around us, not to condemn them, but rather so that we can humbly and lovingly admonish them and help them to become better –

condemning the sin not the sinner. We should admonish the sinner and help him judge himself and correct himself – in this, we show true love for our fellow men with Jesus Christ. We should not forget that Jesus forgave the sinners, but He also admonished them not to sin anymore.

We should forgive those who sin against us as we seek forgiveness from God for our own sins. However, this forgiveness should not be allowed to be construed as permission or license to continue in sin. Along with the forgiveness is the admonition or correction not to sin again.

All of those around us have been placed there by God for our good. And we have been placed in the lives of others for their good. It is His Holy Will that these are there. If we will enter into the quiet contemplation of our souls, He will reveal to us His Will and how we should receive our blessings as well as our crosses. We should discover that everything is His blessing, especially the crosses. All things work for the good of those who love God.



THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Father Joseph Noonan, OFM

The Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi was founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1221. After founding the First Order for priests and brothers, and the Second Order for cloistered women, St. Francis founded the Third Order for married and single men and women.

To aid them in leading a life of the Gospels in the midst of family and secular occupations, St. Francis established the Third Order, a true order, yet something unexampled up to that time, in so far as it was not bound by vows, while it offered all men and women living in the world a means both of observing the Commandments of God and the Church and of pursuing Christian perfection.

A person must be fourteen years of age, of good character, peace-loving, and above all of tried fidelity in the practice of the Catholic Faith and in loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church and the Apostolic See.

Children who are still under parental authority should not be received unless they have obtained permission from their parents. This will impress on

them the duty of obedience and forestall difficulties in the fulfillment of the duties they wish to assume.

It is essential for us to understand that those having an interest in the Third Order that this is a true calling or vocation. It is a different vocation, for in the Third Order one continues to live in the world but is truly a religious, either in the single or married state. Therefore, one must take seriously the discernment process.

This process should first include prayer. Prayer which must include coming to know God's Will in the same manner that a man or woman would regarding the priesthood or the convent. The structure and requirements of the Third Order will help to educate the prospective member in understanding the life of a Tertiary (Third Order Member).

Once the person is accepted as a prospective member by the Fraternity Director, the process begins with a six-month postulancy. During this period classes are scheduled (usually one hour a week) to educate the

person on the history and purpose of the Third Order. This is followed by a detailed explanation of how a person is to live as a member of the Third Order. These classes conclude with an overview and explanation of the indulgences which are available to its members.

This postulancy is followed by a one-year period of probation, otherwise known as the novitiate. This is the principle time of discernment for the novice. He has now begun to learn about the life of a Third Order member and has several months to pray; then a more informed decision is able to be made. It must be noted, though, this is not only a situation where the decision of the novice (perspective member) is the sole determining factor but also that of the Fraternity Director who will determine if the person is a serious candidate or must not be allowed to make his profession.

The Third Order life is composed of two major parts. The first and most important is that of the prayer life of its members. All are encouraged to establish a regular prayer life if one is not already established. At the core of this prayer life is the Seraphic Office. The Office has two options for the Third

Order Secular. The first is twelve Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory Bes to be said each day. The second option is the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also to be said each day. Most Tertiaries choose the first option because of their busy lives.

Members are encouraged to say the Franciscan Crown Rosary each day. This rosary was given to the Order from the Blessed Mother through a Franciscan lay brother in the 15th century. It has since been approved by Holy Mother Church. It is also the most highly-indulgenced rosary in the Church.

The Franciscan Crown Rosary consists of the seven Joyful Mysteries. They are the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the Nativity of Our Lord; the Adoration of the Magi (the Epiphany); the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple; the Apparition of the Risen Savior to the Blessed Mother; the Assumption and Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The second part of this religious life is the performing of good works. An easy way to understand this is the practical application of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Tertiaries are involved in works such as teaching the youth, feeding the poor, needy and homeless, providing food baskets for single mothers and the elderly and visiting the elderly in local nursing homes. A special project is an annual collection taken up for the Foreign Missions in Mexico. There is truly a long list of possibilities for Third Order members regardless of where they live.

Holy Mother Church has blessed the Third Order with an abundant number of plenary indulgences which may be gained throughout the church year. These indulgences, if all conditions are met, are a special source of many graces for the Tertiary.

When one takes a closer look at the Third Order, it is simply what the life of the Catholic should be. It is a structured spiritual daily routine which all are able to perform. It was St. Francis' desire that a greater number of Catholics become members. It was his desire then and the Church's desire now to reform the lives of Catholics everywhere.

The saints and the beatified in the Third Order provide us with a list of persons who came from all walks of life and classes of

society. The rich and poor, royalty and peasants, popes and priests, the young and old, married and single all have answered the call to the Third Order of St. Francis. Our Holy Father St. Francis lived the Gospels to an exemplary degree and desired others to do the same.

If you have not previously considered the Third Order and have a desire to do more than that which you previously have, (or simply wish to be a better Catholic) then pray and speak to your local Franciscan priest. Perhaps you are being called and do not understand these urgings of the Holy Ghost. The Third Order is for the many. Are you being called to this spiritual army of lay Franciscans?



St. Francis gives the cord to Blessed Luchesio and his wife, Bonadonna - the first Tertiaries.

THE THREE LIGHTS

Father Anthony Lentz, OFM

Introduction

The Light of Christ shines through the saints like a prism, showing forth a variety of colors. Spiritually speaking, these colors are the various virtues they practiced. This analogy is especially applicable to the founders of religious orders. For their vocation was not merely to procure their own sanctification, but, by their ideals and example, to help their spiritual children achieve theirs.

Not too long ago I wrote a series of articles entitled "*St. Francis' Spiritual Revolution.*" The purpose of those articles was to explain the nature of St. Francis' conversion from the rich merchant of Assisi to the Seraphic Saint, and how we can learn to do the same from his teachings and example. His conversion towards God was indeed a revolution within himself. He sought, probably more than any other saint, a total mastery over "brother body." He was revolting against the clutches of the world, the flesh, and the

devil. This he did by embracing Christ crucified! The words of his beloved Lord echoed in his heart, "If thou would be perfect deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow Me." God desired all from Francis, and Francis gave all! God willed that Francis would become "an evangelical man," to bring to life the Gospel. In order to do that he had to embrace the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. He was to make them the basis of his rule – his life!

St. Francis' spiritual revolution spread to the hearts and souls of his followers. There are many splendid lights that shine forth from the Franciscan Order. The Franciscan saints and the blessed reflect the sanctity of their founder. They shine forth, varying only in intensity, the evangelical counsels, and they all seek to convert the world back to Christ!

We shall look at three lights in particular, whose sanctity were also an inspiration to

their brothers and sisters, and the whole of Christendom. Each represents one of the three orders: St. Clare of Assisi for the Second Order; St. Anthony for the First Order; and St. Margaret of Cortona for the Third Order.

Since the evangelical counsels were St. Francis' guide we will use them as ours. We will show how St. Clare practiced lowly poverty; how St. Anthony practiced perfect obedience; and how St. Margaret practiced pure chastity. It will be made clear that they each lived up to the spirit of their holy founder St. Francis, who is the "Mirror of Christ."

Finally, I already explained how the laity can practice these counsels in *St. Francis' Spiritual Revolution Part II*, so I will rather devote most of the time explaining how the sons and daughters of St. Francis are able to practice these counsels in today's modern world.

Let us begin with St. Clare.

St. Clare – First Daughter of Lady Poverty

There was a time when St. Francis was uncertain about his vocation. He still lived in the world, but the world was

losing its appeal! He used to enjoy gallivanting through the streets of Assisi with his friends, but now, this too, was losing its savor. He used to be at the head of a parade of youths as their leader, but now he would trail behind the company and become lost in spiritual contemplation. One evening his friends noticed this strange behavior and questioned him about it. They even asked him, probably as a joke, if he was thinking of getting married! To this Francis smiled and said: "Yes, I am thinking of marriage! I will marry the most beautiful bride that this world has ever seen." This bride was to be Lady Poverty. If you go into the Basilica of Assisi you will see a beautiful fresco by Giotto showing St. Francis exchanging marriage vows with a beautiful but poorly dressed young lady and none other than Our Lord Himself is officiating it. What a beautiful scene! This mystical marriage was to be St. Francis' spiritual foundation and he was faithful to his bride for the remainder of his life. The mystical union between St. Francis and Lady Poverty brought forth many children, but none more splen-

did than their first daughter – St. Clare.

St. Clare came from one of the oldest noble families of Assisi, and she was renowned not only for her physical beauty but more so for her virtue. She was always patient and understanding – a true mark of humility. She would dress in plain clothing, but did so according to her station, so as to not draw unnecessary attention to herself. She donated whatever she could to the poor; paying special attention, to the most abandoned, the lepers. When St. Francis began his life of poverty, abandoning all for the love of God, Clare was drawn to this holy way of life. St. Clare is a wonderful example, especially for young women, on how to go about discerning God’s Will. Clare desired to live this life, but first sought St. Francis’ counsel, so to make sure that this was what God willed and not just a passing fancy. St. Francis recognized her sincerity and believed that this was indeed God’s will for her, but because he did not want to trust himself too much on such an important matter; he presented the case to the bishop of Assisi, his friend, and spir-

itual guide. The bishop agreed that this was her vocation and it was decided that Clare was to be invested on Palm Sunday, March 20, 1212.

When Clare attended Mass on Palm Sunday morning she took special care to adorn herself with her finest gown and most precious jewels. What a contrast indeed! But how else would you expect a woman to dress on her wedding day? That night, in the company of her Aunt Bianca and another trusted friend, Clare met St. Francis and the other friars at the Portiuncula, all of whom were holding candles. When inside, with the help of the Benedictine nuns of San Paulo, Clare removed the gown and the jewels and was adorned with the habit of poverty and penance. All vanity was put aside! St. Francis cut off her hair and placed a veil upon her head, as a sign of submission to the will of God. Since she could not stay with the friars, for obvious reasons, St. Francis arranged for her to stay at the convent of the same Benedictine Nuns. This is where she stayed until he permanently relocated her to the cloister of San Damiano.

So how did St. Clare embrace the counsel of poverty in particular? She did it immediately and with a docility that has never been matched in the whole history of the Order. It was by design that Clare dressed in her finest clothes on the day when she left the world. It was a token of her devotion towards God; that she should put aside the finest that the world offered her. It was symbolic to her renunciation of the entire world. The world's bride no longer, but Christ's alone. Think about the multitude of graces St. Clare must have received at the moment when she took her vows! Think about how she used those graces and how they endured for the remainder of her life. Her love for poverty, the poverty of Her Divine Master, did not decrease but increased ten-fold. This we see by her life and the example she set for her own spiritual daughters.

St. Clare and her Poor Ladies (commonly known today as "Poor Clares") while remaining in the cloister of San Damiano continued this strict poverty. Even when there were some in the Order who wished to mitigate the Rule, she and

her daughters remained faithful to the ideals of their Holy Founder. Their continued faithfulness to holy poverty was deeply important to St. Francis. This is made clear from the admonition he wrote to them just before his death: "*I, little Brother Francis, wish to follow the life and poverty of Jesus Christ, our Most High Lord, and of His Most Holy Mother, and to persevere therein to the end. And I beseech you all, my ladies, and counsel you, to live always in this most holy life and poverty. And watch yourselves well that you in no wise depart from it through the teaching or advice of anyone.*" (from the *Opuscula, the classic collection of written works of St. Francis*) We know that Clare remained faithful to the wishes of her spiritual father and would not budge even one iota, even though bishops, cardinals, and even popes had petitioned her to mitigate the rule. In her rule, she writes: "*My sisters and I have always been solicitous to observe that holy poverty which we promised to the Lord God and to Blessed Francis; therefore the abbesses my successors, and their sisters shall be equally solici-*

tous to observe it to the end...” (taken from the *Rule of St. Clare*) It was only shortly before her death in 1253 that her rule was officially granted Papal approval without any alterations.

St. Clare also praised poverty by saying: “*O blessed poverty, who bestows eternal riches on those who love and embrace her.*” Here we have the difference between evangelical poverty and simple poverty. Most people who live in destitution would rather not be, and the thought that someone would desire to willingly live as they do would sound, well, foolish. In the eyes of the world it is foolishness, but when you are a “fool for Christ” it is profound wisdom. Evangelical poverty has at its essence not the exterior renunciation of things, but rather renunciation of all attachment to these things. This detachment is not negligence because the Evangelical man is still a steward and must take care of his Master's goods. The goods of this world are not an end in themselves but merely a means to our greatest end – God. The key ingredient that makes this supernaturally meritorious was given to us by Our Lord Him-

self, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” True evangelical poverty then has its foundation in humility – the mother of all virtues!

Here we now come to a very interesting question: how is evangelical poverty practiced by Franciscans in today's world? This question can have to it a certain amount of criticism. Is there not a contradiction in the way that St. Francis and the first friars lived to how Franciscans live today? There does seem to be a contradiction, but it is only an apparent one. Here is the reality. The economic structure of today is drastically different than it was in the 13th century. Today there is very little that you can do without money or credit; for the bartering system is mostly gone. In order to maintain our apostolate, we have to have access to vehicles, computers, printers, and a place to house all of this equipment. We need to have novitiates, so young men can be trained in the life and the rule of St. Francis within a structured environment. We need to have seminaries for candidates to the priesthood. These young men (this explanation is the

same for sisters and nuns within the Order) also need to be fed and clothed. We must have chapels so we can say Holy Mass and administer the Sacraments to the faithful. Of course, there is not a total conformity to modern economics because we do not draw a salary and we depend upon the donations of the faithful. Every day special prayers are offered for our benefactors – the instruments of Divine Providence.

Even with this explanation, it can still be asked: how can we say that we practice poverty if we have so much? The way we are able to do this can be summed up in one little Latin saying: *ad usum*, meaning “to use.” Everything we have we are merely using and does not belong to anyone of us as individuals. This is that essence of poverty that I spoke of earlier which is not found in *the exterior renunciation of things, but rather renunciation of all attachment to these things*. We have to often ask ourselves, while we use these things, whether or not we have this true detachment. That is if this thing were taken away would I accept it willingly like the holy man Job and say, “*The Lord*

giveth and the Lord taketh away and blessed be the Name of the Lord.” (Job 1: 21) We have to remember that we are called by St. Francis to be “pilgrims and strangers in this world.” To use these things as if we used them not. This is the goal of all true Franciscans living today as it has always been.

“Oh, St. Clare true daughter of St. Francis and Lady Poverty! Help me by your prayers and example to practice a true detachment from all worldly things. May I aspire to renounce this fleeting world and strive only for my heavenly home. Pray for me!”

TO BE CONTINUED





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ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

An Autobiography

CHAPTER TWO

A CATHOLIC HOUSEHOLD

All the details of Mamma's illness are still fresh in my mind. I remember especially her last weeks on earth, when Celine and I felt like poor little exiles. Every morning a friend came to fetch us, and we spent the day at her house. Once, when we had not had time to say our prayers, before starting, my little sister whispered to me on the way: "Must we tell that we have not said our prayers?" "Yes, certainly!" I answered. So, on our arrival Celine timidly made it known to our friend, who replied: "Well, children, you shall say them," and taking us to a large room she left us there. Celine looked at me in amazement. I, too, was astonished and exclaimed: "This is not like Mamma; she always said our prayers with us." During the day, in spite of all efforts to amuse us, the thought of our dear Mother was constantly in our minds. I remember once when Celine had an apricot given to her, she leant towards me and said: "We will not eat it, I will give it to Mamma." Alas! our beloved Mother was now too ill to eat of any earthly fruit; she would never more be satisfied but with the glory of Heaven. There she would drink of the mysterious wine

which Jesus, at His Last Supper, promised to share with us in the Kingdom of His Father.

The touching ceremony of Extreme Unction made a deep impression on me. I can see the spot where I knelt and hear poor Father's sobs. The day after Mamma's death¹ he took me in his arms, saying:

"Come, child, kiss your dear Mother for the last time!" and without a word I put my lips to her icy forehead. I do not remember having cried much, and I did not speak to anyone of all that filled my heart. I looked and listened in silence, seeing many things they would have hidden from me.

Once I found myself alone in front of the coffin, which had been placed upright in the passage, and for a long time I stood there lost in contemplation. I had never seen

¹*Madame Martin died on the night of August 28, 1877, in her 47th year. She lies buried (since 1894) in the cemetery of Lisieux, by the side of M. Martin and her four children who died in infancy. (Rev. Thomas N. Taylor, Editor)*

one before, but I knew quite well what it meant. I was so small that I had to lift up my head to see its whole length, and it seemed a huge and melancholy thing.

Fifteen years later, I was again standing by a coffin, that of our holy Mother Genevieve, and I was carried back to the days of my childhood. Memories crowded in upon me; it was the same Thérèse who looked on, but she had grown, and the coffin seemed small. There was no need to lift up her head, unless to gaze upon Heaven; and Heaven seemed full of joy, for trials had so matured her soul that nothing on earth could make her grieve.

Our Lord did not leave me wholly an orphan. On the day when our dear Mother's remains received the last blessing of the Church, He gave me a second mother and allowed me to choose her freely. We were all five together looking sadly at one another, when our nurse turned pityingly to Celine and to me: "Poor little things!" she said, "you have no longer a mother!" Celine then threw herself into Marie's arms, crying: "Well, you shall be my mother!" Accustomed to imitating Celine, I should undoubtedly have followed her example but that I feared you might be pained and feel yourself forsaken if you too had not a little daughter. So, I looked at you affectionately, and hiding my head on your breast exclaimed in my turn: "And Pauline will be *my* mother!"

With Mamma's death, as I have already said, began the second period of my life, the most sorrowful of all, especially after you, my little Mother, had entered Carmel. It lasted for the space of ten years. At the age of fourteen I recovered much of my early gaiety, though at the same time I began to realize the serious side of life.

Immediately after Mamma's death my naturally happy disposition deserted me. You know, dear Mother, how from being lively and demonstrative, I became timid and shy, and so sensitive that a look was often sufficient to make me burst into tears. I could not bear to be noticed, or to meet strangers, and I was only at ease with my dear ones at home. There I was always cherished with the most loving care. Papa's affectionate heart seemed endowed with a mother's love, while you and Marie were no less tender and devoted. If Our Lord had not lavished His sunshine upon His Little Flower, she never could have become acclimatized to this earth. Still too weak to bear either rain or storm, she needed warmth, refreshing dew, and gentle breezes—gifts never denied her, even in the wintry season of trials.

To Be Continued.....

IS GOD CALLING YOU?

“Be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God.”

Romans 12:2

Do you love serving God and neighbor?

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

Do you yearn for something more?

Not all of us are meant for marriage or a life in the world. Some souls are set aside by God for special tasks. These are the souls that find joy and contentment in the religious life or sacred priesthood.

Do not be deterred by what you think you know or by what the world tells you. Find out for yourself. If you feel called, then at least learn more.

Any happiness we may have on earth and all the joy we hope for in heaven depend on answering God’s individual call for us. The sooner we do His Will, the happier we will be.



THE GIFT OF ONESELF

*From the French of
THE REVEREND JOSEPH
SCHRYVERS, C.S.S.R.*

*Translated by a Religious of Carmel,
Bettendorf, Iowa*

PART TWO

The Practice of Abandonment

CHAPTER ONE

The Practice of Abandonment in General



ARTICLE 5

THE HABIT OF SELF- SURRENDER

To ripen a fruit, nature takes plenty of time. God takes still longer to ripen the fruit of holiness in the soul. After the winter's cold, under the influence of the first springtime rays of the sun, the bud fills with sap; then opens a beautiful flower. This is the generous design which the soul has formed of giving herself wholly to God. The bud is big with hopes; the flower is graceful and charming.

But the flower has a fleeting existence; it falls; and falling, it allows the fruit to take its first form. Then begins the long process of growth and development, but with what

vicissitudes! The fruit must endure heat and cold, sun and rain. At times it seems if all the elements were leagued against it, to detach it from the branch which sustains it and nourishes it with sap.

It is the hard and long work of the formation of the fruit. It is the exercise of self-surrender practiced for a long time, in all circumstances, under the beneficent rays of the Divine Sun, in the time of consolation and the visitation of the Divine Master, as well as in adversities and storms, under the lash of the north wind, in evil days when all things seem to conspire to weigh us down and to wear out our patience.

But all this is good; all this is salutary. Virtue is gradually

strengthened; the fruit reaches full development, acquires a delicious perfume, a rosy tint, an exquisite taste.

At last comes autumn. The sky is more serene, the sun less ardent; but this is the time of the harvest. The soul, too, on reaching the spiritual autumn, sometimes seems less ardent towards God than in the sunny days of summer. Nevertheless, she has long ago passed through that epoch of painful growth. The treetop is covered with savory fruits. The slow and laborious process of attaining her union with God is completed. Now she rejoices. This is because self-surrender has become a delightful habit.

In every circumstance, the soul turns to God easily and spontaneously. She accomplishes all her actions under His Divine Eyes, simply and without haste. In other respects, she does not seem different from other souls. She shows no singularity; and she does nothing extraordinary by her own initiative. Moreover, she does not encumber herself with cramping methods, for she belongs wholly to God. She is content with the Will of God, simply and unaffectedly. She is affable, condescending, but never entangled, never captive. Jesus does not permit this, for she is His property. He is jealous of her beauty.

She lives a hidden life in so far as Jesus wills, neither more nor less. Her instinct inclines her toward a life that is humble, ignored, solitary; for in solitude she finds more refreshing springs to quench her tormenting thirst.

In truth this soul, which is so simple, so little known, so little regarded by the world, lives above earthly things. Her life is an eagle-flight in the immensity of God. But, as she cleaves through space, the soul beholds her horizon widening constantly. There is infinity to traverse!

Oh, blessed life! holy raptures! life of sublime union! fruit of thousands of acts of self-surrender laboriously accumulated by the patient industry of the simple soul!

ARTICLE 6

THE SOUL THAT HAS REACHED THE PERFECT PRACTICE OF SELF-SURRENDER

The life of man is an uninterrupted succession of duties to fulfil; it is a series of events, happy or disappointing. Human reason sees only the present; but God sees the whole life, with all the events of which it is composed. He has appointed all its moments, mingling the agreeable with the painful, joys with sorrows, successes with failures. He has determined its duration and appointed its end. In His Divine plan, the whole must

serve for His greater glory and the sanctification of the elect.

The simple soul, having by practice acquired the habit of self-surrender, allows herself to be led by God through all the events of life.

Knowing nothing of the future, and not desiring to know, she is content to hold God's Hand, and to accompany her Master through the entire day.

She does not indicate to her Guide the way to be followed; she does not tell Him what halts to make, what repose to take. All this is the affair of God. Her part is to clasp the Hand that leads her, and to advance.

She goes neither more quickly nor more slowly than her Guide; she does not ask Him to quicken the pace. She knows that God is the Master of time and of events, and that He will reach the end of the journey at the hour appointed by Him.

Nothing surprises the soul that God conducts through life. All the creatures she encounters serve her, because she holds the Hand of God. But many of them serve her against their will. She knows this. She is neither disquieted nor afflicted. She is aware that many seek to harm her; but she fears nothing, being close to God.

Often, she understands nothing of the events which succeed one

another about her, nor of the changes within herself. She is not disturbed because of this ignorance. She knows that God holds the key to all the facts of history and all the details in the life of each man. She has learned by experience that certain events, apparently unimportant, were destined to have great consequences, that such and such a fact, exteriorly insignificant, was willed by God to rescue her from a danger.

Moreover, she does not judge anything to be superfluous or unimportant in her life; and she meets the least duties, the most insignificant events, the smallest crosses, with great respect mingled with love. She knows that they are as so many particles of the Sacred Host, which, despite their smallness, contain God entirely.

She makes no choice between obligations to fulfil or crosses to bear, by welcoming some and neglecting others. All are of equal value before God. Moreover, she sees no reason for hurrying through such and such a task, in order to take up another. In her eyes, all is pure gold, divine treasure; she has only to amass these riches without choosing.

The simple soul never complains. She does not know of whom or of what she could complain. She has all things in abundance. Each

moment brings her God, with His infinite goods. Creatures serve her, whether they will, or no. Events arrange themselves marvelously, and always to her profit.

She does not repine because she lacks time to give herself to prayer. Everything is a means to her union with God. She does not murmur at the unjust opposition she meets, for this opposition enters into the plan of God. She does not blame others, nor criticize their conduct, for their intentions are hidden from her.

She is content with doing her duty, without too keenly desiring the success of her efforts. Often, excellent souls are troubled at seeing the failure of work they have undertaken purely for the glory of God. They are disappointed and can hardly console themselves. The truly spiritual soul does not fall into this defect. She knows that God has often willed effort and suffering without willing success.

Let us leave to Him the care of His glory. No one will prevent Him from attaining it. Let us not

be troubled by the failure which seems contrary to the interests of God. His views are wider than ours. They embrace the whole of creation and extend throughout eternity.

Ah, how full of divine charm is such a life! My soul, begin, from this very day, to lead it. Thou hast made thine essential act to God; thou art lovingly surrendered to Him; now accompany thy Guide through all the duties, all the events, all the trials of the day. Be content with loving Him; accept what He gives thee; do what He commands thee; bear the crosses that He sends thee; then leave Him free to do in thee and with thee all that He desires. Thy sanctity as well as thy happiness is assured.

O Mary, best of Mothers, I love thee as much as my heart is capable of loving! I wish to remain near thee, as Jacob remained near his mother. Heavenly Rebecca, teach me the secret of pleasing my Father, that He may bless and sanctify me!

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FRANCISCAN SAINTS

SEPTEMBER 6TH

Blessed Liberatus of Lauro

Confessor, First Order

Liberatus of Lauro was a count belonging to the noble family of the counts of Brunforte in the March of Ancona. The glory of the world held no attraction for him, and so he left the castle of his forebears and repaired to the solitary little convent of Soffiano where he was invested with the habit and consecrated himself entirely to the service of God.

With the consent of his superiors, he led a wholly contemplative life after he was ordained a priest. He was very strict with his body, but his soul was so intimately united with God in heavenly sweetness during prayer and meditation that he often spent whole days and nights in contemplation without even thinking of food and drink or experiencing sleepiness. He became a living model of a

religious man to his brethren, who were greatly edified by his conduct.

He rarely spoke; but when he was obliged to do so in order to answer questions put to him, it seemed as though an angel spoke and not a man. God favored this contemplative soul with very special graces; during his meditations he was sometimes rapt in ecstasy and streams of light radiated from his countenance while his heart experienced a foretaste of the joys of heaven.

Worn out with the ardor of his love and with the austerities he practiced rather than with age, he saw his end approaching. In his last moments he spoke to the brethren, who had assembled around his death-bed, on the joys of heaven which he hoped he would shortly possess. Then filled with holy longing he went to the sweet

embrace of his Lord about the year 1260.

The place where his body rests was named San Liberato in his honor and has been glorified with many miracles. Pope Pius IX approved his veneration in 1868.

ON THE JOYS OF HEAVEN

1. One can readily perceive how Blessed Liberatus could experience holy joy and ardent longing in his dying moments when he beheld heaven open before him. What a blessed exchange we shall one day make when we pass from a life of faithful service of God in this vale of tears to the eternal mansions beyond! "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (*Apoc. 21:41*). There will be no sickness in heaven, no want, no affliction; neither will there be persecution, or jealousy, or oppression; it is the kingdom of perfect charity, where each one will rejoice at the good fortune of others, and all will be of one heart and mind like true brothers and

sisters. There we shall see Mary, the Queen of heaven, in all her wondrous beauty. We shall draw near to her as to our mother, and she will receive us as her dear children. There there will be no diminution of happiness, no night, but always the clear bright day that receives its brilliance from the Lamb of God, from the glorified radiant Body of Christ. In that day we shall say in all truth with St. Peter on Tabor: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (*Matt. 17:4*).

2. Consider that there is something higher that will constitute our true and fundamental joy with God in heaven. "We shall see Him as He is" (*1 John 3:2*). What is not vouchsafed to any man here upon earth even during the sublimest ecstasy will be the portion of all those who enter there: the blessed vision of God. The glorified eye will cling to this highest and most excellent good with inexpressible joy. We shall behold in God the unfolding of all those events in life that appeared puzzling to us. We shall then admire the infinite goodness, wisdom, justice, and mercy of God. Each one of us will then also review his own life and

recognize in it the operations of God's grace: the special love with which God favored him in preference to so many others; the long-suffering with which God endured all his ingratitude; the justice with which He punished him; the wisdom with which He guided him through trials to more righteous ways; the mercy with which He repeatedly received him, not casting him off even after he relapsed into sin, but helping him be faithful unto the end. Boundless gratitude, praise, and glory will then proceed from the hearts of all the blessed and cause them to join the choir of heavenly spirits in saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" (*Apoc. 4:8*). — Oh, that we, too, may be there to unite our voices to their song!

3. Consider that we shall not all receive the same reward in heaven. Our Savior says, "In my Father's house there are many mansions" (*John 14:2*). The happiness of the individual inhabitants of heaven will depend upon the sacrifices they made for God during life, on the sufferings

they endured for Him, on the good works they performed, on the loyalty and the charity with which they served God. Whatever material pleasures you offer up out of love for God will be repaid with far nobler joys in eternal bliss. Your sufferings according to their number and measure will be the source of as many more and greater joys, the most insignificant will receive a great reward, and our love for God will be recompensed with God's own love for us. What a consolation in our sufferings here below! Who would not be glad to bear all and despise whatever is material in order to serve God with most perfect charity!

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst inspire Blessed Liberatus to withdraw from the vanities of the world and to take up his cross and follow Thee, mercifully grant that imitating his example we may despise the perishable things of life and serve Thee with pure hearts. Who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen.



THE GREATEST TREASURE

Reverend L. Chiavarino



CHAPTER VIII

HOLY MASS REMITS SIN

St. Augustine plainly states that he who hears Mass devoutly will receive pardon for all venial sins committed up to that hour, and he will be given grace to liberate himself from mortal sin and to cease committing it. Holy Mass remits the guilt of venial sin and aids us to avoid mortal sin.

It is related by St. George that a certain woman was in the habit of having a Mass celebrated each Monday for the soul of her husband who had been taken into slavery by barbarians, and who was considered dead. Many years later, her husband, restored to liberty, told his wife that each

Monday at a certain hour, the bonds would fall from his hands, the chain on his feet would loosen and he would be free for a certain space of time. This was during the hour at which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered for him.

Venial sins may be compared to spiritual bonds and chains. They keep the soul bound and imprisoned, preventing it from acting with the liberty and fervor which it would possess if it were free from these impediments. The Holy Mass breaks these chains by effacing venial sins. Thus, it gives to us the freedom of the children of God.

Furthermore, the Mass frees us from mortal sin. This it does not do in the same

manner as the Sacrament of Penance, by remitting sin of itself. Rather, it obtains for us the grace and the necessary dispositions which cause us to repent of our sins, to seek sacramental absolution, and to resolve never to commit them again.

A young nobleman of Lucca, named Baldassare Guinigi, was passionately devoted to gambling. He set out one day in accordance with his habitual practice to spend long hours in his favorite gambling den. As he passed the Church of St. Michael, he heard a voice within himself say: "Enter the Church, hear Mass, and make your peace with God." After a few moments of struggle with his lower inclinations, he went in, made a general confession to Father Franciotti, and assisted at Mass. Shortly after he left the church, he met some of his friends. They gazed at him in surprise and horror as upon one risen from the dead, and exclaimed in unison: "How can you be here?"

Are you not Baldassare Guinigi? And can you be living again? Have we not mourned you as dead?"

His amazement almost equaled theirs, for he knew nothing of the event to which they made allusion. While he was in church, the house in which his evil companions were gambling had fallen in and they were all buried beneath the ruins. His friends, thinking him to be in his usual place at the gambling tables, grieved for him as for one who had perished miserably.

Guinigi rightly ascribed to the Lord's inspiration the motive which had caused him to hear Mass, and, being grateful to the grace which had preserved him from the fate of his companions, he was fully converted, and lived a holy life until his death.

From this story, dear reader, we may learn how necessary it is to follow divine inspiration and how great is the benefit which we derive when we assist at Holy Mass.



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