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Love of Creation

Bishop Giles, OFM

St. Augustine tells us that our hearts were made for God and therefore, only God can satisfy our heart's desire. All that is, both material and spiritual, has been made by God and therefore, is good and beautiful. All the material things of this world have been given to us by God for us to enjoy. The disorder in the world comes from our attempt to make gods out of the gifts He has given us. In enjoying the pleasures of this world, we often make the fatal mistake of seeking our happiness in these things. We attach ourselves to them as if they were God. They are good and they do bring pleasure, but our hearts are actually looking for eternal happiness that only exists in God. We are often led to accept passing pleasures in the place of eternal happiness. Through this fault, many actually become guilty of idolatry and never truly understand the enormity of this sin.

All that God has made is good. All things are beautiful and are reflections of Him – *but, they are*

not Him. They are perfect in their nature and for the purpose that God created them, but they are not absolutely and completely perfect as God is. We should take legitimate pleasure in the creations that God has given us. We should relish the beauty and harmony of His works. We should even see glimpses of Him in them. We must stop short of making gods of these things or seeking our true happiness in them.

The Pagans see the beauty, harmony, and order in the sun, the moon, and the stars; in this, they are not wrong. Their mistake is in attributing divine perfection to these things and offering worship to the creature rather than to the Creator. Our modern world has made gods out of materialism and humanism. The self-centered people in the world have made gods of themselves. They worship themselves and seek their happiness in themselves. Remember, our hearts were made to love absolute perfection, and perfection is only to be found

in God. Eventually the self-idolizer becomes aware of his shortcomings and imperfections – he realizes that he is not God and his happiness is not to be found in himself. Rather than seek true happiness in God, he often falls into despair and hopelessness.

We tend to sin through the extremes – forgetting that virtue is in the middle. Many love some creature as if this creature could make them happy, and in this they commit idolatry. They begin to labor for the creatures that were meant to serve them. The right order is inverted – man is placed above the other creations, but he often places himself beneath them and labors and serves them as if they were gods. On the other extreme are those who cannot seem to see anything good in God’s creations. All their attention is directed to their imperfections, faults, and failings. While there is order and harmony in what God has created, these poor souls can only focus upon the imperfections. They seek ever higher and nobler standards in creatures. They become refined and very delicate in their tastes. Only that which is perfect can please them. Perhaps the best

example of this is the critic who can find nothing positive to say. He finds faults where most look past the fault and see the beauty and reflection of God’s goodness.

It is said: “A fold in the leaf of a rose is enough to torment the voluptuous man.” Such “refined and delicate” tastes, tends to bring forth not pleasure or happiness, but rather disgust and frustration. Such souls as these are searching for God as St. Augustine was. They are looking for perfection and happiness, but they are looking in all the wrong places. This restlessness of our hearts cannot be satisfied with creatures – we can only find what we seek in God. The sensual man does not lift his mind up to God, but continues foolishly looking for happiness in God’s creatures, rather than in Him.

The material gifts that God has given us are meant to serve us, but due to the inversion of right order, we often end up serving God’s gifts rather than having them serve us. The glutton lives to eat, rather than to eat to live. The miser serves his money, rather than have his money serve himself and God. He builds safes

and shelters, employs guards and security measures, and wastes his life consumed by the constant thought of his “precious” metals and coins. Our constant thought and desire should be of God and Heaven, not paper, stones, and metals. These things should be our aids in attaining the happiness of Heaven – not substitutes for it. Money was not meant to be hoarded or stored up. Money was made as a means of exchange. It is a means for us to obtain or distribute other goods with our fellow men. In coming to the aid of one another, we do God’s work and we merit the rewards of Heaven. What we do to the least of His brethren, we do to Him.

When St. Augustine’s dear friend died, he became so despondent that he could not find pleasure in anything. Even that which used to bring joy, now caused him sadness and pain because his friend was not there with him. In his “Confessions,” St. Augustine tells us that the misery he suffered at the death of his friend was caused by a disordered love of his friend. St. Augustine says that he loved his friend as if he were God, as if he would never die and they would never be separated. This disordered love

for another person is a form of idolatry. In giving his heart over to his friend in this way, St. Augustine set himself up for great disappointment and pain. It is of necessity that we must leave everything behind when we die, or we must lose it before we die. Only God is eternal. In attaching our hearts to these things, we set the stage for our own suffering. Having turned to the creature, we have turned away from God. Having chosen that which is temporal over that which is eternal, we inevitably make ourselves suffer. If we reject God while we are here on earth, it is only just that we be deprived of Him for all of eternity. The inordinate love of creatures thus sets the stage for the eternal suffering in Hell caused by the loss of God. Souls that were made in the image of God and created to be eternally united with Him are eternally frustrated and separated from Him in Hell. They have lost God in preferring creatures to the Creator; and they have lost the creatures which they loved because the creatures are not eternal. Their misery of loss is complete and just and it eats at them unceasingly – filling them with hatred and rage against: God, themselves, and all of

God's creation. Even that which they once loved in the place of God, now fills them with hatred and loathing.

God has given us all His creation to aid us in loving and serving Him. It is truly a strange situation that we so carelessly and easily use His gifts to turn away from Him – even letting them take His place in our hearts. We should love all His creation. Our love must be rightly ordered though. It is God that we must love above everything. Then we must love ourselves in God, and for God. This is followed by loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. Lastly, the rest of creation is given us to remind us of God and His love for us and entice us to pursue the eternal joys of Heaven. If this passing life and earth are filled with such good things, what must await the saints in Heaven?! Everything should draw us ever closer to God, rather than take us further from Him.

We must not blame the creatures for taking us away from God. The fault lies in our own disordered love. The creatures are all good and beautiful. They should be moderately used and enjoyed as God intended them to be. When

we go beyond moderation and love them in the place of God – confusing passing pleasure with true and eternal happiness – it is we who have sinned, not the creatures that we have immoderately turned to.

With every good and beautiful thing that comes into our passing lives here on earth, let us see the reflection of God and His goodness, bounty, beauty, etc. We must not allow ourselves to be consumed by these things, making them into our gods. We must see that they fall short of being perfect. But, we must likewise not despise the gifts of God because they are not without blemish. It is a delicate balance: to appreciate the gifts of God and not become overly attached to them – as well as to see that they are not absolutely perfect, and not fall into a rage and despair because we cannot possess them in all perfection. This balance can be kept when we constantly lift up our hearts and minds to God. When we enjoy His gifts all the while truly rejoicing in Him.

To Judge or Not to Judge

Bishop Giles, OFM

“Judge not, lest ye be judged.” This single phrase from St. Matthew, 7,1; is very often taken out of context and used as an excuse for turning a blind eye to evil. The cowards and the lazy among us use this to excuse their cowardice or indifference. If we take the time to read the rest of the passage and put this into context, we quickly understand that Jesus is condemning rash judgments.

“Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why seeest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye: and seeest not the beam that is in thy own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye: and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” (St. Matthew 7, 1-5)

What Jesus is condemning is hypocrisy not good and true judgment. Everyone in any position of authority is

commanded by God to judge those who are subordinate to him. A father stands in God’s place over his family; and he is required to observe the sins, and even the faults, of his children so that he may lovingly admonish and correct them. A father who is a cheat has little room to punish his son for the same sins. Jesus would not have the father ignore or turn a blind eye to his son. What Jesus is saying is that the father should correct himself first so that he can truly help his son. It is like a man who cannot swim jumping into the river to save a drowning man. Now, there are two drowning men instead of one. Before we can help others, we must make sure that we are in a solid enough position to do so.

Another thought that comes to mind is what Jesus has taught us in The Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.” We cannot forgive what we do not see or acknowledge. We must form a judgment in order to forgive. In forming our judgment, we are to be merciful because we hope to obtain mercy from God.

There is a saying that “Love is blind.” In St. John, we read that: “God is love.” If both of these statements are true, then we must conclude that “God is blind.” This is simply the logical application of equality: If: $a=b$ and $b=c$, then: $a=c$. It is blasphemous to believe that God is blind. We must believe that St. John has not lied, so it must be that the other proposition: “Love is blind” is false. Love is not blind but is clear sighted. If we truly love someone, we are not blind to their faults or failings, but we see them clearly and we seek to do all that we can to help them remove their faults and failings. If we choose to leave them in their errors or sins, we can hardly say that we love them. Love is self-sacrificing, but lust is self-serving. It is lust that is blind, because it never looks beyond itself. Lust cannot see others except as objects of their own pleasure. Love sees others as worthy of aiding with any and every sacrifice that can be made to advance them to their true goal of eternal happiness in Heaven.

Judgment is a comparison between two things. We find the object before us and we compare this to the ideal that has been previously established. In the showing of animals, we have an agreed upon standard and then

we have the animal before us. The judge decides how well the physical animal compares to the ideal that has been established. Every society has customs which become the standard; and everyone is held up in comparison to the standard of the society’s customs. In morality, we have the standard that God has given us of what is correct and what is wrong. In judging every action of ourselves or others, we make a comparison between what should be and what actually is. We consult our consciences that are given us by God and further developed by our parents and the society in which we live.

Every Christian professes to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is, therefore, the standard that we are to compare ourselves to. We are truly Christian only to the degree that we conform ourselves to Jesus Christ. The Christian cannot think himself to be good in comparison to his neighbor. The neighbor is not the standard. We are only good if we conform to Jesus. In the comparison, we must conclude as Jesus said: “Only God is good.” The rest of us are but works in progress. Through the grace and mercy of God combined with our own desire and strongest efforts, we hope to attain to the level of

goodness that will allow us to enter into heaven. We are called upon by God and the Church to frequently make this judgment upon ourselves in our examination of consciences.

If we truly love our neighbors as we love ourselves, we also make similar judgments concerning them – in how they compare to Jesus Christ. The degree of: goodness, beauty, wisdom, etc. that we see in them is the gift of God, and is a reflection of Him. In seeing this in one another and loving one another for these good qualities, we are actually loving God. We thus love one another in God, with God, and for God. This is the only true love that we can have for each other. As we can see, in order to love as we are commanded to love, we must make a judgment. We find a similarity with God and this gives us the capacity to truly love.

On the other side of judgments, we find the lack of conformity with Jesus Christ or any other standard that society has given us, or that we have made. Our love for our fellow men inspires us to help them to correct this defect; to make their lives better; and lead them to true happiness. If we see a defect in others, Jesus would have us first consider whether or not we suffer from the same defect

or worse. There is a philosophical principle that states: “you cannot give, what you do not have.” We cannot clear the spec of dirt from our neighbor’s eye if our vision is hindered by a beam in our own eye. Jesus makes clear that we must first remove the beam from our own eyes before we can be of any help to our neighbor. To avoid the evil of hypocrisy, we must first judge ourselves and correct ourselves before judging and correcting others.

Jesus gives us an example with the woman caught in adultery when He says: “Let him who is without sin throw the first stone.” (St. John 8, 7) The mob had judged and condemned this woman because of her sin. The Law was clear – she deserved to be stoned to death. However, only those who are free of this sin are truly fit to make this judgment as they are the only ones that can see clearly. Secondly, God would have us practice mercy to the degree that we would like to receive mercy. “Forgive us as we have forgiven others.” If we are strict and exacting of others, we can expect God to be strict and exacting of us. Therefore, since we desire mercy, we should be merciful.

We must all make judgments. We must judge ourselves, and then

we must judge others. In judging ourselves we seek the mercy of God; in judging others we should also seek to be merciful as God is. Our judgment of our neighbor is not in comparison to ourselves (this will lead us to the sins of pride and vanity), the rule or standard for us all is Jesus Christ.

When we see someone doing something that is harmful to their body or soul; love demands that we step in and do what we can to help them. This requires us to make judgments. To make proper judgments, we must be clear sighted (not have the same faults or sins that we are trying to remove from them). Love requires a delicacy and tact that is not offensive, lest we only make matters worse. In the Gospel case mentioned above, Jesus forgave the woman her sins and sent her away with the admonition to not sin again. This is the manner that love acts.

The opposite of love is lust. When lust judges and corrects, it lacks compassion and mercy; it is harsh and unforgiving. The corrections that are given from the self-centeredness of lust do more harm than good. It drives the person further away from God and deeper into sin. These are the kind of judgments that God has forbidden us to make.

We must condemn evil wherever we see it, but principally within ourselves. We must judge ourselves first, next those God has placed in our care, and then, motivated by true Charity (love), we must judge our neighbors. As we have sought mercy in judging ourselves, so must we extend mercy in our judgments of others. In judging our neighbor, we are not to speak of his faults to others but rather admonish him in private. The goal is to win him back for Christ – not drive him further away. Sharing his faults with others (slander and gossip) only makes matters worse. We should not seek to make known the faults of others, but we should be desirous of helping one another overcome our faults.

Those in authority must sometimes publicly condemn the faults of those who are committing serious evils, to warn others to avoid falling into the same situation. The Church does this in the condemnation of various heresies and schisms. Parents must often point out the sins of others to their children to instruct them and protect them from the like misfortune. In these cases care must always be taken that the bounds of Charity (true love) are not crossed.

Humility is Truth

Bishop Giles, OFM

Humility is truth. It seems that when we speak of humility, most people conceive an idea of humility that is not humility at all. It is a false humility that so many think of and therefore, pursue. We often read in the lives of the saints of how they considered themselves the worst of sinners. Reading this next to all their virtues that are related in their lives tends to lead us to consider that humility is not the truth but an exaggerated denial of ourselves and the good that God has placed within us. The writers of these lives of the saints have done many a great disservice by not clarifying this point. The lives are written for our instruction and imitation.

This false humility leads us in two very dangerous directions. The first wrong conclusion is to deny that God has placed anything good within us. God has given everyone at least one talent. That talent is good and it must be employed for the benefit of God and our fellow men. If we wrongly deny that that talent exists in us, then we become like the servant that buried his talent and was condemned by the Master.

The second wrong direction that is often taken is that of speaking and acting humbly before men, all the while our hearts and minds are filled with pride and vanity. This is hypocrisy and is condemned by Jesus. All the good works of the Pharisees was counted as nothing because of the pride that filled their hearts. They did their works before men, to be praised by men and did nothing for God. Jesus did not condemn the good works, but the pride that attended them. He would have us do our good works in private where only God sees, so that we seek only a reward from Him.

Humility is truth. When the saints speak of themselves as the worst of sinners, they are not exaggerating or lying. It is perhaps, difficult for us to understand because we have not reached their state of perfection. Perhaps the best place to begin in our attempt to understand true humility is to clearly see that we are not given our fellow men as our standard to measure up to. When we compare the lives of the saints with other men, we see clearly that the saints were not the worst of sinners. When the

saints make statements like this, it is not in comparison with other people. The saints are comparing themselves to Jesus Christ. They have contemplated truly and honestly the graces that God has showered upon them, and likewise the waste, misuse and abuse that they have made of these graces. They have clearly understood the directions of Jesus when He says: “After you have done all things well, say to yourselves that you are unprofitable servants. For you have only done that which you ought to have done.” The saints are truly humiliated at the lack of virtue within themselves after God has given them so much. As they recognize the superlative goodness in Jesus, they cannot help but see the superlative lack of goodness within themselves. Saying that they are the worst of sinners is not in comparison with any other human, but is spoken only in comparison with Jesus. In this context, what they say is true. It is not in despair or hopelessness that they speak, but rather with true faith, hope and charity.

The saints see that in comparison with Jesus, their works and goodness are truly nothing. In this context, all of us may style ourselves the worst of sinners. We must, however, not seek to compare ourselves to one another or to be more humble than our

neighbors. When this happens, we become proud of our alleged humility and thus have nothing at all.

Another trap to be cautious of in our pursuit of the virtue of humility is falling into laziness, lethargy, or indifference. It is easy for us to fall into this when we think that we can do nothing good and so we should stop trying. A false humility suggests that there is nothing good within us and that in striving to perfect ourselves we only make matters worse – hence the best thing is to give up. The despair of saying: “I am already going to go to Hell, so why should I bother trying to be good?” is a truly false humility. There is a lot of pride when we consider that we are such terrible sinners that even God cannot forgive us; or He cannot save us. Many in the world believe that this is humility, but it is nothing less than demonic pride and vanity.

In true humility, we recognize the inadequacy of our efforts, but it is not in our efforts that we have any hope of pardon or salvation; our hope is in the merits of Jesus Christ poured out upon us through His Holy Catholic Church. True humility spurs us on not to abandon our good works, but to ever increase and perfect them. As feeble as all our efforts may be,

they are necessary. In the trades, an apprentice is encouraged to attempt to imitate the labors of the master. His efforts are at first useless, wasteful and counter-productive when viewed from the surface. However, every mistake that the apprentice makes teaches him what not to do the next time. In this context, it was not a waste but a very valuable learning experience.

We are all apprentices in the spiritual life and Jesus Christ is our Master. He has said, “Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.” He expects us to put our hands to the labor of salvation. He can and will fix our mistakes if we are truly striving to be one with Him. Our efforts will improve over time as we learn what not to do. However, all the time we understand with St. Paul, that any good that is within us is from Him. “I am what I am by the grace of God.” The good that comes from our works are not our own, but are actually His. “It is no longer I, but Christ Jesus, working within me.”

The humility of the Publican as contrasted with the pride of the Pharisee gives us a wealth of instruction to consider. The Publican surely has done something good, but in the presence of God he can only see the void in his own life. The Pharisee

did some good things, but that was all he could see of himself. He did not see the void in his life caused by his sins, negligence, and imperfections. All the Pharisee’s good works were undermined and destroyed by the sin of pride, so that he was left with nothing. The humility of the Publican filled up and surpassed in goodness all the works of the best of men, so that he was justified and filled with the grace of God.

Lastly, we ask our dear readers to consider the life of the Blessed Virgin-Mother Mary. At the Annunciation, she is not filled with pride or vanity for having obtained the notice of God. In the very moment when the angel expresses to her God’s love for her and all her merits, even declares her to be “full of grace,” we find her humbly referring to herself as the “handmaid of the Lord.” She sees that the good in herself is the work of God and not her own. She sees that any future goodness that might be hers is also from Him. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy Word.”

She, the mother of God, has taken a hidden role in the life of Christ. She did not seek her own honor or glory, but only the honor and glory of God. “Filled with grace,” and the “mother of God,”

as well as countless other honors and privileges are hers, yet, we see that she followed Jesus in all humility and meekness. Even when she asked a favor of Him at the wedding feast, we see profoundly her reserve, modesty, love, compassion, but most of all her humility. There is not enough time or space to recount appropriately even the few appearances she has made in the Holy Gospels, much less the various titles and honors God has showered upon her through His Holy Catholic Church. We only

strive here to inspire souls to see her humility and form a desire to imitate it, growing in perfection day by day through the grace of God.

In imitating Mary and the saints, we are not comparing ourselves to them, but rather we are imitating them in their imitation of Him. Our comparison is to be with Him and in this, we may truly humble ourselves as the least and the most unworthy because He is the greatest and the most worthy.

The CHERUB

The CHERUB is a quarterly magazine published under the auspices of the Province of St. Peter of Alcantara and the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi.

The purpose of this magazine is to provide spiritual and catechetical education; we hope it will supplement children's regular course of study.

Inspiration is also a desired goal for elementary and high school students. The Catholic youth of today ought to look forward to their adult lives with a reasonable hope inspired by Catholic saints serving as true role models in their daily lives.

Parents may find it useful and quite enjoyable to spend time with their children while they read the magazine or take part in the The CHERUB'S activities.

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Catholic Education and the Ignorance of the Past

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

Part I

One of the earliest changes which took place in the Catholic Church in the 1960's was the elimination of teaching Catholic doctrine in the different levels of the Catholic school system. A significant additional change was the elimination of the teaching Sisters in the elementary schools. Within a few short years, the Catholic school education had been undermined by the clergy who were given the responsibility of properly educating the youth.

In hindsight, it seems as though few parents understood what was taking place. Fewer still understood the enormity of the betrayal.

It hardly took a generation before the tragic effects of no longer teaching the True Faith in the classroom were seen by the more astute Catholics. The Modernists wanted the average Catholic to be ignorant of the Faith so as to more easily control and fool them. Perhaps their true goal was to undermine the Faith of the lay Catholic and eventually bring down the Church with it. It didn't take long before the "foundations" of the Church began to crumble.

The Catholic schoolchildren were not only being deprived of the basic catechism, their Catholic heritage was being torn out from under them. We now have the benefit of looking back and understanding the decisions which were made in the 1960's and 70's. The decisions were too thorough to mere happenstance.

A short overview will provide the reader with a more detailed understanding. Depending upon in which diocese you lived, the religion texts of Catholic elementary, high school and colleges was changed in the mid-1960's. This fact alone is interesting. The anti-Council of Vatican II had just ended in 1965. How is it that texts throughout the school systems, at least in the U. S., were being printed either before the Council ended or just afterwards? Either the promoters of the "new religion" were geniuses and were able to put together a multitude of books within a year or two, or they were planning these texts for several years and were simply waiting the "light to turn green" before they distributed these heretical books.

This writer experienced this firsthand. I was taught the Baltimore Catechism in the First, Second

and Third Grades (the school years 1962-63, 63-64 and 64-65). Suddenly, in the Fourth Grade, I was “introduced” to the infamous Sadler Series of books. From the Fourth through the Eighth Grades, the students were fed these heretical books. Schools plan at least a few years in advance their respective curriculums. One can only wonder how far in advance these books had been planned. The texts for high schools and colleges would require more planning. Did these Modernist heretics begin writing these books prior to Vatican II?

The greatest tragedy of this “new education” for a “new religion” is the ignorance of the Faith, causing the loss of Faith, or never possessing it from the beginning. According to general calculations, a third generation of Catholics is now being “educated” in the Modernist religion. Is it any wonder that only about 20% of U. S. Catholics are now practicing the “New Faith.”

At nearly the same time the texts were being changed, the teaching Sisters were being told to leave the schools. Apparently the founding purposes of these religious communities were no longer important. They must now take off their habits and live as lay Catholics. Perhaps the large wardrobe of clothes, jewelry, etc. would now make them relevant

in the Modern world! They were to elevate their spiritual mission by selling insurance, real estate or Mary Kay Cosmetics! (I kid you not!) One wonders why more Sisters did not leave their communities and form “Catholic” communities.

In the 1970’s, the clergy and religious found excuses not to have the parochial school children attend Mass each day. Children’s choirs had been discontinued.

The hemlines of the girl’s uniform skirts and jumpers were now the unacceptable miniskirts. Many have wondered over the years how the Sisters tolerated such immodesty, but they did. The impurity and immodesty of the time led to promiscuity between the all-girls schools and the all-boys schools. Pregnant Catholic teen-age girls had become too commonplace. One Rochester, NY “Catholic” all-girls was nicknamed by the girls themselves (circa 1981) as “the home for unwed mothers!”

It was around the same time that U. S. Bishops began sex-education programs in the elementary and high schools. Parents loudly protested but to no avail. Apparently, these clerics were determined to destroy the morals of the Catholic youth. Once again looking back over 30 years, the youth did not need much help. There really wasn’t

much difference between the environments of the “Catholic” and public schools. Perhaps the most noticeable difference is the lack of hypocrisy in the public schools.

It is amazing to this writer that so many parents were clueless about the destruction of the schools. It seems as though they accepted the lies of the clergy. Nearly 50 years later, unbelievably, some parents are not aware of the heresies which have been taught in the schools for nearly 50 years.

The Modernists were indeed thorough, teaching heresies and corrupting morals at the same time. That pattern has continued to this day, undermining Catholic souls for two generations, with nothing but an act of God to stop them!

Herein lies the point of this article. It wasn’t just the catechisms and religion books which were changed, nor was it only the morals which were corrupted. It wasn’t just the Sisters, Brothers and priests who were removed from the schools, nor was it simply the Mass which is now nothing more than a Lutheran communion service or the Sacraments which were quietly changed enough to question their validity.

It is all of these and more. Our Catholic heritage and culture have been ripped away in the most

devious manner possible. In the name of what is supposed to be a good, the greatest possible evils have befallen the Church. Holy Mother Church is nothing more than a shadow of its former self. There are a rapidly decreasing number of Catholics who have an acceptable understanding of the Faith, and further still, have a minimal grasp of the Catholic Culture which has been handed down from our Catholic ancestors.

Far too many Catholics believe they need only to learn the basic catechism and attend Mass on Sunday to be considered a good, practicing Catholic. This mediocrity has in 50 years brought the Church to a spiritual precipice, with many having already fallen into the adjoining hellish gorge.

Fortunately, there are a small number of Catholics who wish to live the True Faith. Among them are parents or soon-to-be parents. They have the best of motives in desiring to conduct themselves as True Catholics in a pagan world, but they have the most basic of problems and a large number of them are not aware of the problem.

To be Continued

A Chance to Live

Monsignor John P. Carroll-Abbing

III

HEROIC HEIGHTS OF UNSELFISHNESS

“... by the *thousands who strong in their resistance against misfortune, sorrow and temptation. ...*”

(Continued)

“The Germans are still in Gubbio,” he remarked.

“Can we go a little farther along the road?”

“Go ahead if you like,” he said shrugging his shoulders. With this dubious permission, holding within it a warning and a piece of advice, we proceeded.

Beyond Rome, the Allies pointed northwest and carried on operations through Umbria, on the road which, in its spurlike formation, bypasses the valley of Gubbio. The Germans had entrenched themselves on the citadel dominating the surrounding country.

We climbed the road and on reaching the top of the rise we drank our fill of the magnificent peaceful panorama flung out below us. The profusion of

green, the wealth and luxuriance of foliage gave mute evidence to the justice of the praises the poets of Italy have showered upon “Umbria Santa,” Holy Umbria as she is called.

In the background separated from us by a deep valley, Gubbio rose with its towers, its narrow streets, the russet of its walls cutting the translucent blue of the sky. This was the place where the humble Saint of Assisi had been able to tame even the wolves of the forest!

I told my driver I wished to go on by myself, not wanting him to run useless risks, but he refused to listen to me. Reluctantly, I nodded and we proceeded toward the bridge in the distance.

Silence, an ominous silence was all about us. At any instant, we expected some kind of reaction from the Germans hiding in the hills above us. However, we reached the bridge and crossed it in safety. We covered the remaining distance in record time.

The Bishop of Gubbio, Monsignor Ubaldo, amazed to see us,

immediately assured me of the fate of the children. The reports had been erroneous. Not one had been taken as hostage. Gubbio and its inhabitants had not been so fortunate.

The retreating Germans had installed themselves in the northern part of the city and were using the belfry of the Basilica of St. Ubaldo as an observatory. In the church proper, they held close to 230 hostages, 70 children among them. These unfortunates had sought shelter there in order to escape the danger of air raids on the town. Their situation became critical, when the Germans, giving the proximity of, the Allied forces as an excuse, prohibited anyone from leaving even for the purpose of procuring food in the city proper.

On July 3, the British initiated a terrific bombardment. Much damage resulted. Among the buildings struck was the cathedral and in this contingent, which protracted itself for twenty-four hours, the hostages were left completely isolated.

An attempt was made to send bread to them after an appeal to the German Command had brought the desired permission.

As the volunteers reached the church, one of them was shot and killed by a German sentinel. This stopped all further efforts.

The situation of the hostages continued serious until July 24. On this day, the Germans suddenly withdrew from the town and the prisoners were freed. They were emaciated from the long fast, many not having touched food for two days. They pleaded for a piece of bread, and many fell from sheer exhaustion. Men and women wept for joy and lifted feeble voices in prayer, thanking God and St. Ubaldo, the protector of the town. They returned home hopeful for the future. Life went on.

The children who had come from Castel Gandolfo had been relatively lucky, in comparison to the seventy who had been for almost a month prisoners in the Basilica. Not so lucky had been the children sent to Città di Castello, which had its own share of suffering.

The opinion formulated by some that Umbria would be spared proved to be utterly false. On June 19, the German Command, in the merciless way we have often noted, ordered that Città

di Castello be cleared of all inhabitants within twenty-four hours. The usual penalties were threatened for anyone caught disobeying the edict.

The bishop was at first denied permission to remain within the city limits. Later he was allowed to stay in his house, a virtual prisoner. Through his intersection, many of the religious communities were permitted to remain.

In one of these convents lived the children who had come from Castel Gandolfo.

One day the peace they had found was to be rudely shattered.

For thirty-two days aerial bombardments had succeeded one another without let-up. Grenades, howitzers, machine-gun bullets, tore apart, gutted, scorched the outskirts of the town. Forty-four bridges leveled, countless buildings pulverized, the railroad station reduced to an unrecognizable pile of, stones and twisted iron.

The convent where the children had found shelter was in the heart of the city. Danger and lack of food made it advisable to remove them to another building on the outskirts. This was done with all possible speed and

caution.

The distance from the city gave assurance of a greater degree of safety from the raging battle. The little ones and the nuns were made as comfortable as possible in one of the wings.

Early one morning a half-dozen of the small tots were playing in the courtyard under the watchful eye of one of the nuns. There was the usual sound of distant cannon, but no one was paying any attention as even the noise of cannon can become a common, everyday sound. Besides had they not been told that they were far away and safe?

Without warning a new and more terrifying noise was heard, as of a giant wheel rolling clumsily along a pavement and meeting one obstacle after another. The trouble was that this pavement seemed to be in the sky. Louder, heavier, then an earsplitting crash ... a blinding light, a terrifying roar ... and in the courtyard ... silence, followed quickly by heart-rending shrieks of pain and terror.

The little girls scattered seeking a hole in which to hide, an avenue of escape.

In the middle of the courtyard lay a small body, an old dirty

doll clasped close. A couple of yards away, another, and still farther on, the black-gowned body of the nun. No more games, no more dolls, no longer would these little girls play at “ladies,” their laughter tinkling in the sunshine. No longer would the other and older one nurse and bless and smile. Hate had seen to it that nothing of all this could ever happen again.

The transfer of the refugees from the Castelli areas was over. This allowed me to visit more often the concentration camps situated at Cesano and Torre Gaia. Both camps had an iniquitous reputation because of prevailing conditions and the complete isolation of the interned.

At Torre Gaia, immense barnlike sheds had been converted into huge dormitories. Thousands of refugees had been allocated there. They slept on the bare floors, as they had been obliged to leave behind them all of their household goods. No means or opportunity had been afforded them for taking along anything. Only a mere handful could boast of a little straw on which to lay their weary bones. No privacy existed. Family groups lived, ate, slept, where everyone else lived and ate and slept.

The children wandered about in a filthy condition, unwashed, uncombed, hair crawling with lice, many of them suffering from trachoma. In their wanderings, they did exactly as they pleased in the long, idle, endless hours of day or night.

Early one morning, I found myself on one of the roads which was most frequently strafed. If safety was to be given any consideration, the hours soon after dawn were the only ones that offered it to any degree. On that particular day, I came to it just as a number of German busses arrived crowded with evacuees.

I helped an old man as he stepped out. Still fairly well groomed, he wore a dignified air, between that of a university professor and a family lawyer. I learned later that he was a doctor of medicine. All his near and dear had died. Seventy-five years of age, he had half a century of professional work to his credit. Entirely alone, he had considered his calling an apostolate.

In the little town in which he had spent all of his useful existence, simple, narrow perhaps, but not lacking in a certain ease, in gay, pleasant days, everyone

including the oldest considered him the beneficent godfather, who year after year had given his counsel and advice, not restricted exclusively to his professional field.

The day before, he had seen his whole world crumble. His medicine cabinet, his tools, the little black leather bag he had not been allowed to take along in the hurried departure, some of his clothes, his best black ones, everything gone!

He told me all this in cultured, nostalgic speech.

“On my return I shall find nothing ... my instruments, the ones my father gave me through the years while I was still at the university ... those I shall miss most ...”

He gave the impression of a full life that had suddenly been snuffed out. I felt depressed as I sat listening to so old, so fine a human being and thought of the cruel blows fate had reserved for him in his late years ... of how helpless, hopeless, and alone he was.

At the Cesano Camp it was an impossible feat to try to provide any amount of decent living conditions. There was little water and we felt utterly

helpless in trying to prevent or care for the infectious diseases that soon developed in the close promiscuity.

The women, wretchedly clad, rose early as they had been accustomed to do in bygonedays. There were no household tasks for them to attend to, however, nothing for them to work at, so they meandered here and there seeking the unseekable, eyes dull and lifeless, expressions vacant, foolish. They finally sat down near the spot where the daily rations would later be distributed and waited ... sometimes for hours ... far past the midday hour. And when the food did come, it was the same as the meal that had been served the day before and the day before that: soup, thin, watery, bread, poor, tasteless ... and very little of either.

Sitting around in groups, munching, the youngsters talked of nothing but bread, real bread, macaroni, meat. They dreamed their dreams and discussed them as mere chimeras of the imagination, unrealizable, unattainable.

“As soon as this war is over, I’ll run home and then straight to Righetto the baker and I’ll

eat two hundred cookies,” one would say, his imagination and his hunger enlarging the capacity of his stomach.

“I’ll do better than that,” mocked a second, “I’ll make it three hundred.”

“Go on ...” ridiculed a third, “why not make it a thousand?”

Day by day, I discovered new tragedies.

Several years before a small family lived quietly and contentedly in the Abruzzi, a region known for its poets, its mountain landscapes, its rugged inhabitants. The father, mother, and a young son, still a boy, had a modest home there, a field and a cow. In the spring and in summer, the work of plowing and planting was done with assiduous care. In the wintertime, when so many hours had to be spent indoors, the three wove straw baskets and thus added to the family income. Life was plain, monotonous, yes, no distractions came to break the even tenor of it, but the family did not complain, they were satisfied. Now and then they took a trip, a short one to shop for necessities or to barter something superfluous for something needed. The boy

attended the rural school and grew up as all children of his age grow up, more preoccupied with the building of a cage for the bird caught in the woods or with fishing for the brook trout than with doing his schoolwork.

Trouble had seldom touched the little home, except in a small way when it became necessary to incur a small debt in order to buy more grain for the wheat field. Yes, life there was serene.

Came the war. The father was not called to the colors in the beginning, for he was the only support of his family, but in the subsequent years his status was ignored and he was sent for and recruited for construction work in the fortifications then being built on high Alpine peaks, miles away from his family in the south of Italy. The mother and his child lived on alone, until their home was razed to the ground in an air raid. The cow was killed, they escaped.

To be continued.

Sister Agnes' Favorites

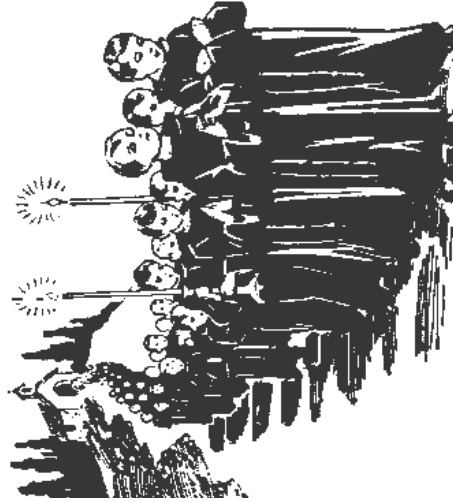
The Friar

Julian Del Casal (1863-1893)



Barefooted, in his hood and cloak of brown,
Mounted upon his burro's chubby back
To beg the pious alms that fill his sack
The old Franciscan starts at dawn for town.
Behind him sounds the early belfry down
To call to Mass the faithful in his track;
The summons floats afar into the wrack
Of pink and golden clouds, the dawning's crown.
His breviary at his elbow tucked away,
His rosary rattling heavily with his sway,
He reckens that his givers shall not lag;
And hearkens as he paces down the road,
Between the burro's braying for the load,
The wind that whistles through his empty bag.

From the Spanish by Thomas Walsh



Franciscan Saints

SEPTEMBER 14

THE SERVANT OF
GOD MAGDALEN OF
ROTTENBURG Widow,
Third Order

Magdalen of Rottenburg is one of the servants of God whose fidelity was tried in various stations in life and who was always found to be a model to the members of her sex. She descended from a very noble family, and although the pleasures and good things of life were at her command, she did not give herself up to the enjoyment of them, but rather used them to benefit others through the practice of works of mercy.

She yielded to her parents' wishes and married a young nobleman. She loved him in Christ, and gave proof of her love in the many prayers and holy Masses she offered up for him after his early death. As a widow and a mother, she set herself to give her daughter and an orphaned relative a good education. When they were both settled in life, almighty God, as a reward for her fidelity, granted her the special grace to spend the remaining years of her life among

the spouses of Christ.

By divine dispensation, Magdalen one day paid a visit to the Ridler convent of Tertiaries in Munich, and while there, she experienced a most extraordinary desire to remain there. At her urgent request, she was clothed with the holy habit. She who had spent her days in the world as one of its prominent women, and had been accustomed to give commands and to be respected, now took the greatest pleasure in serving others, in performing the lowliest work, in taking the last place among her sisters in religion.

But God almighty raised her up and drew her to Himself with frequent ecstasies in prayer. It is recorded that once during a procession on the feast of the Ascension, she was raised high up in the air as though she were rising to heaven in glory with Christ. In the year 1534, she died a blessed death.

ON GIVING A GOOD EXAMPLE IN EVERY STATE OF LIFE

1. Consider how exemplary our servant of God was in every station in life. As a young woman she was not deceived by the vanities of the world, but applied herself in charity to the poor and the suffering. As a married woman she loved her husband with the love of Christ and manifested this love even beyond the grave. As a widow she had children to care for, and it was her earnest endeavor to provide for them for time and for eternity. After she withdrew from the world, she was still in old age a model for all religious by her humility, her subordination, her sincere piety. — Do you endeavor in your state of life to be worthy of this example?

2. Consider that our servant of God became a model to all, just by adapting herself to the duties of every new condition of life in which she found herself. It is a grave mistake for people to believe that they would surely be happier and serve God more faithfully in another state of life than the one in which they are at present. The poor man and the unimportant person believe they could lead a more exemplary life if they were better provided for or occupied a more prominent position; married people think they could serve God better if they had not married. The Apostle

warns us against such thoughts: “Art thou bound to a wife, seek not to be loosed” (1 Cor. 7:27). And the Holy Ghost assures us that “God made the little and the great, and He hath equally care of all” (Wis. 6:8). God also gives you the graces proper to your state. If you cooperate with them, you will live a holy and exemplary life.

3. Consider that we ought to look upon every circumstance of life as being part of the plan which God has chosen for us to attain to sanctity. “Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God” (Ecclus. 11:14). It is God’s will that every person be saved; so of course He must arrange things that all can achieve their goal. But His will is our sanctification. Therefore say with Thomas a Kempis (3:15): “Lord, I am Thy servant, ready for all things. I am in Thy hand; turn me hither and thither as Thou chooseth. I do not desire to live for myself, but for Thee. Oh! that I could do so in a worthy and becoming manner!”

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(Eighteenth Sunday after

Pentecost)

Let Thy grace and pity guide our hearts, we beseech Thee, O Lord, for without Thee we are unable to please Thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corpus Christi Construction Update

This Summer has been busy as the construction continues on the new church after a pause of a few months. The duct work for the central air system was installed in early July. Later in the month, spray foam insulation was applied to the exterior walls and ceiling. About two weeks later, in early August, the church was drywalled. As of the writing of this update in mid-August, the drywall is being finished. In a week or so, the walls will be textured and painted. In addition, all of the central air system will be installed, including the inside and outside equipment.

The construction is indeed nearing completion but more of your kind donations are needed. There will be a pause in the construction once those things already described are completed. The goal of reaching \$275,000.00 is still ongoing. We are in need of \$43,000.00 to reach this goal.

The speed at which this church has been constructed has been truly amazing. God certainly has blessed our efforts. A most gracious thanks in gratitude is extended to all who have contributed. If you are able to help us with what is hoped to be one final push to reach our goal and complete the church, the pastor and laity of Corpus Christi would be most grateful.

You may follow the progress of the construction in pictures on our website www.catholichour.org. Click onto the construction picture on the front page.

Donations may be sent to:
Corpus Christi Church
1114 30th St.
Lubbock, TX 79411

The Sunday Sermon

The Sunday Sermon is a biweekly paper that offers a few spiritual thoughts for each Sunday throughout the year.

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THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

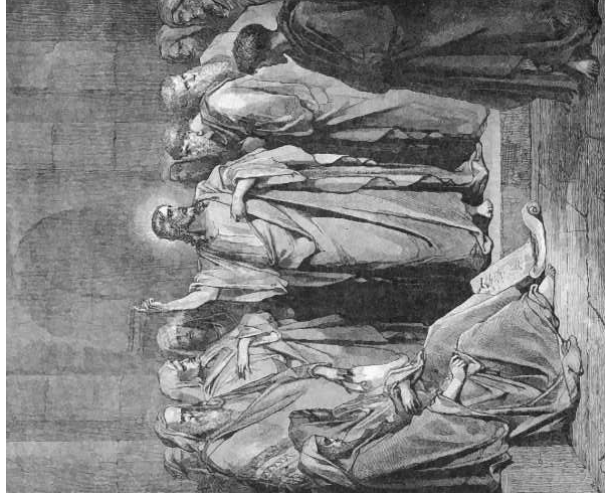
OR,

CONSIDERATIONS ON
THE IMPORTANCE, AND
HAPPINESS, OF ATTENDING
TO THE CARE OF OUR
SALVATION.

BY THE REV. J. FLETCHER, D.D.

“Give me understanding, and I
shall live.” — PSALM cxix.

1834.



CONSIDERATION XIV. ON SIN.

If we could see the beauties; and knew all the delights, of - virtue, we should be ravished with its charms; should love it with ardor; and pursue it, as our sovereign good. These are the observations of a pagan philosopher. In like manner, could we see the deformities; and knew all the miseries, of sin, we should be disgusted with its ugliness; should hate it with abhorrence; and fly from it as our sovereign evil. In reality, such is the true character of *sin*. Composed of everything that is most odious and pernicious, it is

truly our sovereign evil, an evil that far surpasses all other evils put together, destroying the union between God and man; annulling our claims to future happiness; rendering us the victims of eternal misery; deranging the harmony which should subsist between nature itself, and the human soul; and dragging after it, everywhere, a long, heavy, chain of present misfortunes, and calamities. In fact nearly all the miseries that are endured in this world, distress, and poverty; shame, and disgrace; sicknesses, and premature deaths, are the attendants, and effects of sin. Whilst, as to its effects in the life to come, these we all know

are more dreadful still: fires, and torments, which never end; sorrows, which always weep; and despair, which howls eternally. Such is sin; such its fatal consequences.

Considering these accumulated evils, it should seem to us but natural to suppose that the prevalence, therefore, of so prolific a source of miseries would not, at all events, be very widely extended. It should even appear only reasonable, and consistent, to imagine, that loving ourselves, and terrified at such horrors, we should avoid it with care; or, rather, flee from it with trepidation. Alas, such, no doubt, would be the case, did we only think; or did we merely consult even our present happiness. But, so it is: We do not think. And hence, that sentence of the divine wisdom: “*With desolation is the whole earth laid desolate, because no one thinketh in his heart.*” Sin now, owing to this want of thought, reigns everywhere in every shape of corruption, and disorder. Its dominion is universal, extended through all the paths and avenues of society, infecting every state and condition; defiling each age; and tainting alike each sex. And

then, what should appear the most surprising, as it is the most afflicting, is this, that men, for the most part, live on under its miserable tyranny, heedless, and unconcerned.

I. The circumstance, which principally constitutes the basis of sin, is the rejection, which it implies, of God’s authority; and our positive refusal to submit to His commands. In reality, sin is an act of downright rebellion against Him. Each time we sin, we equivalently tell Him, in the words of the prophet, alluding to the ungrateful Jews, “*I will not serve Thee. Neither Thy greatness, nor Thy goodness; neither Thy threats, nor Thy promises, shall engage me to do so; I will not serve Thee.*” Such is our conduct; and such equivalently our language, each time, that we sin mortally. There is, surely, in this a measure of guilt, which justly deserves the severity of God’s displeasure. And it is accordingly this, this act of disregard, that chiefly forms the foundation of sin. Why we know, that the rebel angels refused, only once to “serve.” And their whole disobedience was but the impulse of a passing thought. And yet, for this single offense, such is the severity, with

which God visits the neglect of His authority, they are doomed to torments, which will last forever.

II. But, whilst the neglect of the divine authority is, of itself, sufficient to convince us of the guilt of sin, there are, moreover, a variety of other circumstances appended to this disorder, which, still augmenting its criminality, ought powerfully to restrain us from its commission. Among these there is none more striking than the ingratitude, which it comprises. It comprises in itself the blackest ingratitude, the neglect, and disregard, of a father, benefactor, lover, &c. In His capacity of a Father, and Benefactor, God has absolutely loaded us with benefits, both temporal and spiritual. Thus, it was for our sake that He called the whole order of nature into existence, creating the fruits to feed us; the animals to serve us; the very flowers to please us. Whilst, in order to preserve the continually renewed fecundity of these benefits, He sends down the dews, and the rains, to lend their aid. In short, every comfort, and satisfaction, which we possess in this life, are His gift. And what is it, that, in return for all these blessings, He is pleased

to require on our part? Why this, that we should pay Him the easy, trifling, offering of our gratitude. Accordingly, what aggravates particularly the guilt of sin, is the refusal of this tribute. It is this unkind denial, that so justly provokes His indignation: for, nothing is so justly indignant as kindness despised, and generosity neglected.

But, if we thus trace the guilt of sin, in our unfeelingness for the favors, which God has bestowed upon us in the order of nature, how much more strikingly should we be convinced of this disorder, did we but view it in the coldness of our insensibility for the still greater blessings, which He has bestowed upon us in the order of Grace. It is here, that His mercy is the most astonishing; and His benefits, the most stupendous. He has here, indeed, done every thing for us, that the excess of kindness could suggest. He has even Himself, in the Person of our amiable Redeemer, come down from His throne of glory; assumed our nature; and, in order to ensure our salvation, laid down His own Sacred Life.

Could love possibly do more than this? However, not even is

this all, that this Divine Being has done for us. For besides this wonderful manifestation of His mercy, He has, moreover, conferred upon us a multitude of other blessings, connected with it, every instrument to support our virtue here, and to secure our happiness hereafter. If, therefore, ingratitude be, anywhere, criminal; if, anywhere, insensibility to kindness be odious, it must, doubtlessly be so in the neglect of benefits, and in the disregard of tenderness, and favors, such as these. Well, and what again is the character of our conduct each time, that we sin, that is, each time that we offend God mortally? Why, not only are we, on such occasions, ungenerous, not only do we then violate every law of gratitude, we positively trample His mercies, and His kindness under foot. Nay, “we even crucify again,” St. Paul declares, “*as much as lies in us,*” the very Being, that has died to save us. It is therefore this base ingratitude, this contempt of infinite goodness, that constitutes the blackest feature in the guilt of sin; and that, beyond every other circumstance awakens the divine displeasure. The flames, which burn, and will forever torment the sinner, rush chiefly

from the wounds of Jesus. The sharpest arrows of heaven’s vengeance are those which have been dipped in the blood of our Redemption; in the fountains of grace; and in those hallowed streams, which flow from the sanctuary of our altars. The justice of the Almighty exults as much in the punishment of our ingratitude, as His mercy rejoices in the remuneration of our love.

III. We hardly ever calculate the force; or measure the extent, of our obligations to God, either by the claims of the gratitude, which we owe to Him for His mercies; or by the principles of the love, which is due to Him for His divine perfections. If we serve Him, it is, in general, much rather from a principle of interest, than of love. Or if we abstain from sin, it is much more from the impressions of fear, than from the impulse of generosity. Well; admitting even these selfish motives, it ought still to appear to us a very important act of prudence to consider seriously the evil of sin in the prospect of the punishments which its commission entails upon us. The punishments of sin are the proofs and expressions of its guilt. They are but proportioned to its malice;

and to the unspeakable aversion, which the divine sanctity bears to its defilements. And what, therefore, (let us often ask ourselves this useful question) what are these punishments? Oh; dreadful mystery! more distressing to our self-love; — more astonishing to our reason itself, than perhaps any other dispensation in the whole order of religion. The punishments of sin are indeed frightful, — more cruel, and severe, than either our imaginations can depict, or our timidity apprehend. Compared with them, all earthly torments are light. The fires, and racks, of the martyrs; the most painful operations of surgery; the most excruciating diseases, are, if placed by the side of them, but so many downright pleasures. Whilst, again, what, above all things, renders these inflictions still more horrible, is the fact, that, by an unchangeable decree of the divine justice, they are ordained — without any mitigation; without so much as one gleam of hope, — to last forever. With this impression engraved upon our minds, not only should we be sensible of the guilt of sin, — but, if we really loved ourselves, or consulted our very self-love, we should,

even in this case, flee from its contagion with far greater trepidation, than we should do from the jaws of the dragon; or the face of the serpent.

We form our ideas of the atrocity of any crime, according to the weight, and nature, of the punishments, which are inflicted on it, — a rule, which is alike reasonable, as it is just: for, the measure of punishment should always be proportioned, as much as may be, to the measure of the evil, which has provoked it. At all events, such as this is the rule, and order, of God's justice, in which the inflictments upon sin are but adapted to the degree, and quality, of its enormity. This principle admitted, let us again judge by it how great must be its guilt; and how hateful its malice in the eyes of God. Thus, we have remarked already: — the angels sinned *only once*. And for that single crime, they have been condemned; and are consigned to everlasting misery. Thus, in like manner, our first parent sinned. His sin was merely an act of forbidden curiosity. And yet, for this seemingly small offense, — this passing, momentary, inattention, — God visited him with the severest penalty. He converted his paradise of

delights into a vale of tears; and his doom of immortality be changed into a sentence of death. And unhappily for us, — not only this, but, by a decree, frightful, as it is now incomprehensible to our weak understandings, — he entailed, in His justice, the same misfortunes upon His yet unborn, and therefore, as yet unoffending, offspring; — ordaining, moreover, that they should last till the end of time. So that, in reality, all the evils, — the whole deluge of calamities, which have ever inundated the world, — are, all of them, the effects of *one single sin*. Thus, too, it is, more or less, in relation to ourselves: — For one single mortal sin, unrepented of, — if unfortunately we die in such state, — the justice of God will condemn us to torments, that will endure forever. Oh, once more, — did we but carry about with us these recollections, not only should we be careful to avoid sin, we should tremble at its very shadow.

IV. There are many other considerations besides the foregoing, which should serve, — and which to a piously enlightened mind do effectually serve, — to restrain us from the pursuits of sin. Such, for

example, are the following: — Our souls, by virtue of grace, are rendered the living temples of the Holy Ghost: and by sin, we forfeit this transcendent honor. By grace, we are made the objects of God's complacency, and friendship, — beloved, and cherished by Him, as His own dear sanctuaries: and by sin, we become the very objects of His aversion. By grace, we treasure up for ourselves a little fund of merits, and of delightful expectations: — and by sin, squandering all these away, we reduce ourselves to a state of indigence, and distress. Possessed of grace, we enjoy peace of mind, and tranquillity of heart: — but no sooner does sin establish its dominion in our breasts, than peace forsakes the unblest abodes; and cares, and uneasiness, enter. It was accordingly, for reasons such as these, — combined with those, which we have been considering, — that we see, in every age, so many pious individuals, not only shunning vice, but the slightest breath of its contagion. It was hence, that we see so many holy solitaires burying themselves in caves, in deserts, and in convents; — the penitents, bewailing it, night, and day; — the martyrs, cheerfully laying down their lives at the stake. In

reality, so great is the guilt; and so many the evils, of sin, that, rather than commit it, — that is, rather than commit it mortally, — we ought to sacrifice, — and if prudent, we should be ready to sacrifice, — not only every worldly good, but our very lives themselves.

Wherefore, let us often, and seriously, meditate upon this evil. If it be our misfortune to be involved in its guilt, let us, in the spirit of heart-felt sorrow seek at once a reconciliation with our neglected and insulted God, thus preventing those deep regrets, which, this admonition unattended to, we may, perhaps very soon, experience on the bed of sickness. Oh, had we but ears to catch the sad sounds, to hear the groans and accents of distress, which, at this very

hour, are re-echoed from that couch of misery by thousands of unhappy beings for having refused to listen to such useful warning, we should then indeed feel sensibly for the dreadful evil. Harkening to their regrets; and witnessing the wretchedness of their condition, we should, in sentiments of humble piety, bend our knees before God, imploring His mercy to save us from the like calamity. We should at once set about the work of our reconciliation. Not even should we resign ourselves, this very night, to the arms of sleep, until we had done something towards disarming His displeasure, shed, at least, a tear over our past ingratitude; and resolved to live better for the time to come. Each night, that we lie down in sin, we lie down on the brink of a precipice.

THE 2018 FRANCISCAN CALENDAR

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