

THE SERAPH

February 2018

Vol. XXXVIII No. 6



The Seven Founders of the Servite Order

The Seraph

Vol. XXXVIII No. 6

PUBLISHED WITH EPISCOPAL AUTHORIZATION FEBRUARY 2018

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| The Assault on Love | 1 |
| Marriage and Our Union in the Church | 4 |
| St. Francis' Spiritual Revolution..... | 9 |
| Sister Agnes' Favorites..... | 13 |
| Denial of the Spiritual Realm | 15 |
| A Chance to Live..... | 18 |
| Franciscan Saints | 24 |
| THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN | 26 |

EDITOR

Bishop Giles O.F.M.

PRODUCTION

Mr. Francis Y. No

Bishop Giles O.F.M.

CONTRIBUTORS

Fr. Joseph O.F.M.

CIRCULATION

Bishop Giles, O.F.M.

The **SERAPH** is published monthly except July and August by the Franciscan Friars at 3376 Mt. Read Blvd. Rochester, NY 14616.

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

The **SERAPH** stands opposed to any and all heresy, erodoxy, particularly as manifested in today's heresy of Modernism. It holds to the principle that good will without truth is a sham and that truth without good will is a shame.

The **SERAPH** seeks to serve and unite in spirit all Roman Catholics faithful to tradition and all men of good will for the betterment of society according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

USA: Free upon request.

Suggested donation \$20.00.

FOREIGN: Air Mail: \$40.00 per year

ALL CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE SENT TO:

The SERAPH

3376 MOUNT READ BLVD
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14616

Tel. (585) 621-1122

e-mail: friars@friarsminor.org

web sites: friarsminor.org and

franciscanfathers.com

EDITORIAL POLICY

Articles dealing with Roman Catholic doctrine, morals, history, and spirituality are welcome. The Editor reserves the right to edit and / or use articles submitted. Manuscripts returned with SAE. Opinions expressed in **THE SERAPH** are not necessarily those of the publishers.

© 2018 All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced without written permission of the publishers.

Publishers

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

In essentia - Unitas. In dubio - Libertas.
In omnibus - Caritas.

The Assault on Love

Bishop Giles, OFM

In the Spring of the year, it is said, that a young man's heart turns to thoughts of love. Romantic love seems to be a blend of the Divine and the demonic. Our literature and entertainment often present love as something that is beyond us, or out of our control. It is something that happens to us often against our own wills or desires. There is something magically beautiful and alluring, yet there is something that is painful and destructive, as well.

The Faith teaches us that we have been made by Love (God is Love) and we have been made to love (God made us to know, love, and serve Him in this world. The greatest commandment is to love God.). We have also been created to be the receptacles of love. The second of the greatest commandments is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. As neighbors of one another, we are meant to receive the love of each other. Therefore, we have been made by Love, we have been made to love, and we have been made to receive love.

We are also recipients of God's love. Love is our greatest gift and envelops our entire lives, both here on earth and in Heaven. Love is the most precious gift that we have to give. There is a saying that, "the bigger they are, the harder they fall." The greater the treasure, the more dangerous it is. Since the beginning of time, the demons have hated men because of our ability to love. Having lost this for themselves they are filled with envy towards us. The demonic plot throughout all time is to destroy, undermine, or misdirect our love.

Because humans are composed of both body and soul, the first tactic of the demons is to tempt us to redirect our love from the spiritual to the material. They would have us love physical objects rather than the Pure Spirit of God. In putting physical things in the place of God, we become guilty of idolatry. The demons are indifferent to what material objects we put in the place of God, as long as we do not direct our first love to God. We commit idolatry when we love

wood, stone, metal, food, wealth, property, power, etc, more than we love God. In misdirecting our love to these things, we are often led to love these even more than we love our neighbors. Thus, we break not only the first and greatest commandment but also the second one, too.

Romantic love is very beautiful and holy, and therefore, the demons have pulled out all the stops to destroy all that is beautiful and holy in romantic love. Our world today speaks of romantic love but we have, for the most part, lost all connection to true romantic love.

The second tactic in the demonic assault against us is to get us to believe that love is not an act of the will – it is not a choice but is rather something that we have no control over – it is something that just happens to us. In this context, lust or infatuation are easily confused with real love. Rising passion or temptation wells up within us without our consent and often against our wills, and we often give in because we have come to accept that it is out of our control. We find plenty of examples of this in the metaphors that we use to speak of love. We speak of “falling” in love. Not, entering into, stepping into or

even jumping into; but “falling!” It is an accident that we cannot help or prevent.

If love is something that happens to us and we have no control over, then the commandments of God are illogical, not appropriate, as well as impossible to observe. This idea is truly demonically blasphemous. Love, then – even romantic love – is always a free choice of the will. We cannot be forced or coerced into loving another. If we are forced, even by our own lusts or passions, we can be sure that it is not true love.

Another metaphor that we often hear is that “love is blind.” We refute this simply by noting that God is Love and God is not blind. God sees all and knows all. If we are blinded, then it is passion or lust but it is definitely not love. This “blindness” to one another’s faults direct us to speak in terms of idolizing or worshipping the one that we love. Putting a frail human being on a pedestal to be worshiped is idolatry and an offense against God, but it is also a very cruel thing to do to another. It places unreal and impossible demands upon them to be a perfect idol or god. When a man is placed upon this pedestal by a woman, he tends to arrogance, pride, vanity

and to the ultimate abuse of his authority and strength. If he goes to the other extreme, he falls into despair – never able to live up to the unreal expectations placed upon him. The same is true when men place women on a pedestal. Women become “helpless,” yet demanding creatures that need to be served and taken care of. Once they realize that they cannot ever measure up to the Divine – their youth, beauty, charm, all fade away, they also fall into despair and hopelessness. With one swift blow, the devils destroy both the one who “loves” and the one who is “loved.”

We can resist these traps by constantly reminding ourselves that true love is under our own control, we cannot fall into it or be taken over by it. We must use not only our wills but also our intellects. We must objectively choose love with a fully informed reason. True love sees the other as a real person, like themselves, made in the image and likeness of God (but not God). It sees their faults and weaknesses and in spite of these, chooses to love and commit themselves to a lifelong relationship with this person.

True human love works towards overcoming faults and drawing

closer to God and seeks to do the same for all that it loves. Those that sin together or tempt one another to sin, do not truly love one another. They are enemies of one another, they are mutual instruments in the hands of demons. Unions that begin or continue in sin are doomed to failure. These are not true love, and cause heartache, frustration, hopelessness, despair; and the fruits of this: divorce, abortion-murder, infanticide, suicide etc.

As the thoughts of our young people turn to romantic love, may they seek to dismiss all the counterfeits of lust and passion; searching out freely, and logically, with complete mastery and control, suitable life-long mates. There is no doubt that there is a profound spiritual element in all this, and God gives this grace to whom He Wills, and so we should implore His grace and guidance. Let us confess our sins and receive the Sacraments frequently so that we may be the best we can be and thus, be a worthwhile mate to someone, even as we seek the same in another.

May St. Valentine guide and protect our young men and women as they seek out life-long romantic partners and mates.

Marriage and Our Union in the Church

Bishop Giles, OFM

“What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” Is it God or is it man that joins together husband and wife? Are their vows made to God or to each other?

Our world today, in denying all things spiritual, seeks to deny God’s existence, and reduce everything to materialism. This has carried over into the very sacraments themselves. The marriage vows are being redefined as nothing more than contractual promises between two people. A vow, by traditional understanding, is a promise made to God. A vow, when accepted by God, cannot be set aside. Some have argued that the Church (pope and bishops) have been given the power by God to bind and loose. “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.” Please note that the Church can bind and loose its own laws and regulations. However, a vow is not made by the Church, it is not a binding made by men – it is a binding

between God and the person. This is outside of the power to bind or loose given to the Church. The marriage vows are with God and above the power of the Church to dissolve.

Marriage is the union of man and woman with God. It is the foundation of society, even the foundation of The Church. The Mystical Body of Christ is founded upon our union with God, and our entering in and cooperation with His Will. This is accomplished by our Baptism. This second birth necessitates that there is a first birth, and a first birth necessitates union of a family (father and mother fruitful in matrimony). It is not a simple linear progression but is a bit circular. Which comes first Marriage or Baptism? Marriage necessitates Baptism, and Baptism is made possible by an antecedent marriage of the parents. We have simply focused on the idea of the family as the origin, foundation, or archetypal source of all our societal relationships. God

created marriage in Adam and Eve before He created birth in their children.

True marriage is a participation in the creative work of God. Even marriages that do not produce children are expected to be fruitful in God's grace. This sacred union of a man and wife with God is made to draw us into ever closer union with Him. Husband's and wife's principal duties are the mutual sanctification of themselves, each other (and any children God gives them). "Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the Church. Wives honor and obey your husbands as the Church honors and obeys Christ." The Mystical Body of Christ (The Church) is the type of the marriage. It is given to us as the example to follow. However, true marriage predates the creating of the Church. Marriage was distorted and mutilated by sin, and this necessitates God giving the Church as the standard to live up to for husbands and wives. If marriages had not been defiled we could have the members of the Church look to true marriage as the example of how to live in the Church.

Marriage is in God and with God. That is what our vows

mean. These cannot be dissolved by men. The Church may permit the setting aside of a lesser vow for a higher one, but never can She release us from a higher vow to embrace a lesser one. This is so because we are always permitted to set aside the lesser for the greater, but we may never set aside the greater for the lesser. A religious who has made vows in a less strict order may be permitted to set aside those vows to enter into a more strict order. St. Anthony of Padua was permitted to set aside his vows in the Augustinian Order to enter the Order of Friars Minor.

We are not permitted to alter the wedding vows as these are, in a sense, primordial. These vows are until death separates. The Church may investigate and find that a supposed marriage was not truly a marriage for one defect or another (annulment) but, it is not in her power to dissolve a true marriage. The only dissolution of a true marriage is in separation by death. The Church approves of separation of husband and wife when the situation becomes intolerable, but neither party is free to marry again, until the death of the other spouse.

The devils are fighting a war against God. Since they cannot

attack God directly, they must attack Him in us. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ and can be assaulted but never overcome. The souls that are destined to enter the Church, however, can be undermined. To attack God, they attack the Church, and to attack the Church they strike at the family. To destroy the family, they simply strive to destroy Holy Marriage. Without Holy Marriage, there is no true cooperation with the Will of God in procreation. There is no advancing in the filling of Heaven.

The devils seek to keep us from entering into Heaven because they hate God and do not wish to see anyone eternally happy in Heaven with Him. There may be another reason that the devils seek to keep us out of Heaven. When Heaven is filled and the number of the elect has been signed and sealed, this world will come to its end. Christ will return, the earth will be renewed, the bodies will be raised and reunited to their souls. Now what the devils dread most is that they will not be permitted to roam the earth anymore – they will have to enter in forever to the depths of misery and suffering in Hell.

As long as Heaven is not full, as long as the Mystical Body is not complete, time continues and the devils roam freely on this earth. The devils don't care about us, they are only concerned with themselves.

Thus, we see that the attack upon the Church is an attack upon marriage, and likewise: an attack upon marriage is an attack upon the Church. As Catholics and members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we must hold and keep marriage in the highest regards. We must ever seek to make and keep it holy and sacred – resisting the devil's suggestions to make it lowly, dirty and vile. Marriage is beautiful because it is union with God – divorce makes it cheap and demonic as it separates us from Him.

Is it time to renew your subscription?

Or have you received a sample copy?

Check your mailing label and the last page of this issue for Subscription Details.

Pray for Vocations

Bishop Giles, OFM

Where are all the vocations? Are there truly so few young souls that have the capacity of love to give themselves completely to God in religious and priestly vocations? We wonder if God is not giving these vocations or if our young people are truly so self-centered or self-absorbed that they are incapable of loving God to the extent of dedicating their lives to Him. Or is it possible that our youth does not know that this is an option for them?

If we are now at the end of time and there is no longer any need for priests and religious then, perhaps God is not calling them. However, this seems rather unlikely. It is the Will of God to remain with us, here on earth until the End of Time, and this suggests that there will be souls dedicated to loving and serving Him right up to the bitter end. The Scriptural indications are that the number of those with true faith will be few when He returns. Will the Son of Man find faith on this earth when He returns? (St. Luke 18:8) They also suggest that there will be some because the days will be shortened for the sake of the elect. (St. Matthew 24:22)

There was a dramatic physical destruction of vocations following the false council of Vatican II. It

seems that the majority of these had already spiritually turned away from their vocations years before. The generation of priests and religious that held onto these gifts have passed them on to us, and our numbers are fewer than the remnant after the false Council. The number of those coming up in the ranks behind us, seem to be even fewer.

Historically, when the Faith grew cold, there followed resurgence through one or the other of the saints. These saints became the instrument of God in restoring some of the lost faith to their particular time in history. Have we used up all the graces that God has allotted to mankind? This seems to be very unlikely. God is infinite and will the salvation of those at the end of time just as much as He will the salvation of those who lived in the beginning. It would be erroneous and blasphemous to find fault with God.

It is frequently said that the vow of celibacy is the reason there are so few vocations. If priests and religious were allowed to marry, there would be more vocations. Yet, the Secular Third Orders appear to be challenged for new members as well. There are some who may jump at the opportunity to become “married” priests or religious. If

they have true vocations, it would seem that they would be eagerly entering into the Secular Third Orders and be very active in these as well as in parishes – showing forth an ever-increasing depth of spiritual living. But even this, seems to be severely lacking.

The scarcity of vocations is not to be resolved by lowering the historical and legal standards established by the Church and the Religious Orders. Have we been found unworthy of the grace and benefits of religious and priests in our own day? We must pray and offer sacrifice that God will, in His Mercy, send us some true worthy vocations to carry on the priesthood and the religious life. We must also do what is in our power to esteem and point out these high vocations to our youth as worthwhile, desirable, and actually attainable.

Of utmost importance is that we must make better use of the graces that we have been given. There is a principle that we lose what we do not use, and this appears to be also applicable to the Sacraments and graces bestowed upon us by God. The destruction of the Sacraments by the Modernists seems to indicate that there were few who were properly approaching and receiving these sources of grace. As men turn away from God and the Church, God withdraws His Presence and grace from men. It is time for us to wake up from our lethargy and truly treasure the graces that God

has given us and make the best use of these graces that we can.

When the sacraments and graces are truly valued and treasured, grace will be increased. The necessity for priests and religious will increase and God's mercy will not turn a blind eye to our dire necessity. Our prayers will be heard because they come from hearts that are lovingly aching for the graces of God. Those who have been given the seed of a vocation will see it develop through the humble and pious prayers and sacrifices of others. Through these humble and pious prayers and sacrifices, we can storm heaven and obtain the mercy of God, as well as inspire and nurture those delicate buds of a vocation in the hearts of the next generation.

It is the vocation of one and all to encourage and nurture the graces of God in each other. We are to support and lead those around us ever closer to God. Especially, we should encourage and foster religious and priestly vocations. The spirit of sacrifice needs to be practiced, embraced, loved, and cherished rather than feared and avoided. This will please God and bring forth His mercy upon us, and will also give courage and strength to those whom He has called to serve Him in even greater self-sacrificing love.

St. Francis' Spiritual Revolution

Brother Anthony Lentz, O.F.M.

Part Two

St. Francis was a truly valiant and chivalrous man – a knight in the true sense of the word. He was a man of action, not being content with mere counsel. He sought to lead all men back to Christ through his example. He was a shining light, a candle on the lamp-stand lighting the whole house. The fame of the Little Poor-man of Assisi grew, and he was arguably the most popular personage of his time. Taking his fame into account, one may wonder exactly how St. Francis saw himself. In the book *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, he said: “You want to know why it should be me the world is running after? This is granted me because the eyes of the Most High God, which look upon the good and the evil in every place, could not find among sinners anyone more vile, worthless, and sinful than me, or any baser creature on earth for the marvelous work He intends to perform. So He has chosen men to confound the nobility, the greatness, the power, the beauty, and the wisdom of the world. He has done this that men may understand that all virtue and all good proceeds from Him alone,

and not from any creature.” The reason why St. Francis looked upon himself as the worst of sinners is because he was not comparing himself to any other man but to Our Lord Jesus Christ. To imitate Christ should be the goal of every Christian, for the name Christian means a “follower of Christ.” Every Christian should take to heart those immortal words of Our Lord, “If any man wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.” (St. Luke 9: 23) Here we are given, in a very simple way, the steps required before we can truly be called a follower of Christ. First, one must deny himself, that is, to learn humility, at least to some degree; and second, one must take up his cross, that is to learn patience. We find that the lack of these two virtues is what hinders most people from advancing in the spiritual life.

“Do not put the cart before the horse” is a very famous saying that means do things in their proper order, otherwise you will fail – like a cart not being able to move forward! The correct place to begin is by reforming the sensual and spiritual faculties. We

have five senses: sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. Many spiritual writers have compared our five senses to five doors into the soul; for whatever enters in and makes an impression upon the senses will also make an impression upon the soul. Like doors, our senses must be opened in order to allow good things to enter in and they must be closed, even locked on occasion, in order to keep bad things out. Because of this close connection between the body and soul, the reformation of the senses will usually lead to a reformation of our higher faculties: the intellect, memory and the will. The connection will be made clearer when we touch on some practical examples.

Throughout our pilgrimage on this earth, we must do battle with a threefold evil: concupiscence of the eyes, concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life. St. Francis battled these enemies by following the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. It is true that all Catholics are not bound to observe these counsels the same way as solemnly professed religious, but they should observe them spiritually and according to their station in life. Franciscan spirituality compares these three vows to the three nails which

pierced the hands and feet of Christ while He was upon the cross. Here again, we return, as we will often do, to this beautiful and mystical picture of a life centered on Christ crucified.

Concupiscence of the Eyes

It is recorded in the *Legend of the Three Companions* that before his conversion Francis had been given “over to amusements and songs and liked to stroll day and night through the city of Assisi with comrades of the same age.

In his expenditures, he was so liberal that he wasted on parties and other merrymaking everything he might own or acquire... Always generous, even prodigal, he also lacked moderation in the way that he dressed: he had suits tailored for himself that were much more elegant than his status demanded.” We see here that the young Francis suffered greatly from the concupiscence of the eyes. It is true that concupiscence of the eyes deals mainly with the sin of avarice and its relation to money, but it also entails any inordinate love for worldly things. We can clearly see that Francis was not at all avaricious, but his love for pleasing his friends and his love of fashion entrapped him in this deadly vice.

After his conversion, we see that Francis embraced holy poverty and renounced all worldly goods and entitlements. His love for poverty was so great that he called it “Lady Poverty” and had with her a mystical marriage. He would often remind his brothers that they were merely pilgrims and strangers in this world, and that “....they are to carry nothing for the journey, neither a sack, nor scrip, nor bread, nor money, nor staff.” (the *Rule of the Friars Minor* of 1221) It was this voluntary poverty that was truly extraordinary, truly revolutionary. This holy ideal was so high that even Rome showed its hesitation in approving it. Of course, this poverty was based on the Gospel so they eventually approved of it, lest they be guilty of blasphemy. St. Francis gives a very reasonable argument as to why holy poverty should be sought after by the friars. He said, “If we owned anything, we should have to have weapons to protect ourselves. That is what gives rise to contentions and lawsuits, and so often causes the love of God and neighbor to be interfered with.” Who can argue with the reasonableness of these words?

But how does all of this relate for those Catholics who still live

in the world and who must own things in order to fulfill their responsibilities before both God and man? Yes, it is true, that we all cannot totally renounce ownership of things like St. Francis did, but we can have his same spirit of detachment. It is rather fascinating that even before his conversion St. Francis was already teaching us what we should do, or rather, what we should not do with regards to poverty. We learn from the young Francis Bernadone that in order to be pleasing to God, we should practice moderation in how we live. This moderation can be a sort of poverty because we do not need to wear the finest clothes, nor need the nicest car, nor do we have to own the newest computer. We should only seek to own what is necessary for our station in life. If you are not sure what is necessary then simply ask the question, do I really need this or do I just want it? Following this moderation, there should be a sense of detachment from all the things we own. We should ask ourselves if God were to take away all that I have would I accept it willingly? Would I say with the holy man Job, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord?” Practicing detachment and

moderation in those things which are lawful will help keep us from falling into various vices.

Concupiscence of the Flesh

Although we entered into the state of sanctifying grace at our Baptism, removing original sin from our soul, we are still weakened and have a propensity to that which is evil. This is most clearly the case with the concupiscence of the flesh. If a man were to allow it he could let his lower nature take over, and he would succumb to sins of impurity. He would be like an animal, not thinking but just reacting to stimuli. This is the key to why we must control ourselves because man is a rational animal with an immortal soul. His reason must dominate, his soul over his body. All, no matter whether they are married, single, or in the priestly or religious life, must work to overcome the stirrings of their lower nature. All must practice, to some degree, the virtue of chastity.

Even before his conversion to the religious life, St. Francis already possessed an angelic-like chastity. His desire for knighthood imprinted upon his character a chivalric ideal which held womanhood in high honor. After his conversion, an even greater ideal was set before him

– the purity of Christ. It was because of his desire to imitate Christ that he sought to control all the stirrings of the flesh. There are certain episodes recorded in his life that when he was being tempted by an impure thought that he would scourge himself until he bled, or throw himself into a thistle bush, or expose his bare skin to the chilling elements of winter. A person can easily become disheartened when reading about these and similar accounts of the extreme measures that St. Francis took in order to overcome the temptations of the flesh. It is important to not let the austerities and penances of St. Francis detour advancement in the spiritual life. There is an old saying in the Franciscan Order that there are two kinds of Franciscans – St. Francis and the rest of us. This almost humorous remark is not meant to take away from the holiness of the various saints and blessed of the Order, but it is only meant to emphasize the special calling which was St. Francis'. Those men and women who are founders of religious orders are given very special graces, which their followers will not receive. It is the ideals and the rules of the founder which are mainly our guide.

(To be continued)

Sister Agnes' Favorites

Excerpts From:

A Thought of St. Teresa's for Every Day of the Year

February 1st

He who has a good friend like Jesus with him can endure and suffer all things, for He helps us, strengthens us and never forsakes us.

Life of St. Teresa, xxii

February 6th

If you interiorly offer your sacrifice, Jesus Christ will unite it to that which He offered to His Father for us on the cross; thus your particular sacrifice will have as much value as you have merited, even though the works be small.

Mansion 6th, Ch. iv

February 14th

It is certain that the love of God does not consist in shedding tears, nor in experiencing sweetness of tenderness of heart but in truly serving God in justice, strength and humility.

Life of St. Teresa, Ch. xi

February 27th

Were we to recognize how important and how necessary to us is charity towards our neighbor, we would devote ourselves to nothing else.

Interior Castle, Ch. iii

The Catholic Faith Radio Program

<http://catholichour.org/>

Teaching the True Catholic Faith and condemning Modernist errors.

The Catholic Faith Radio Program is broadcast live each Friday from 1:30 - 4:30 p.m. (Central Time) in the studio of KRFE AM580, Lubbock, Texas. It is streamed live on <http://catholichour.org/>. If you are unable to listen live, you may go to the website anytime and listen to the recorded broadcast at your leisure.

The Catholic Faith Radio Programs are available on CD for \$10.00 each (one program):

To order by the month they are \$35.00 per month, which includes domestic postage. Foreign orders should add an additional \$10.00 for postage.

Write to:

Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church
1114 30th ST
Lubbock, TX 79411-2702

The Sunday Sermon

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

The Sunday Sermon began with a desire of our people who could not get to Mass on Sunday.

The Sunday Sermon has now become very popular. Subscribers are asking that we send The Sunday Sermon to their friends and relatives.

We only ask the small donation of \$10 per year (or whatever you can afford) to help us cover the cost of production and mailing.

Why not subscribe today for yourself or a friend?

Write to:

The Sunday Sermon
3376 Mount Read Blvd.
Rochester, New York 14616

Denial of the Spiritual Realm

Bishop Giles, OFM

With the progress of Humanism and Materialism, we witness a fading of belief in spiritual realities. It is not just a refusal to believe in God, but it has become a refusal to believe in all things spiritual. There is the tendency to think of the demonic as superstition or as mental psychosis. Paganism is spiritual in its origin, Satanism is spiritual, but this Materialistic Humanism seeks to “rise above” all things spiritual and accept only that which is physically tangible. This curse of our world today has created a great amount of confusion, harm, and destruction.

Before the coming of Jesus Christ, spiritual realities and spiritual beings were accepted and believed. It was understood that spiritual beings are influencing and changing this world through their works or inspirations. The Pagans sought to appease the gods or devils. The great achievements of mankind were seen as having come from some spiritual being – a muse,

genius, an angel, or a devil. This belief became so strong among some that they began to believe in a dualism, where all that is good is caused by the good spirits and all that is bad or evil is caused by the evil spirits. This dualism was presented at one point by the Manichean sect which St. Augustine (before his conversion) accepted. This dualism was very convenient for men because we are not responsible for anything that is bad – it is the bad spirits, not us. But, logically men could not take credit for anything good either because this was the work of good spirits.

This dualism has been condemned, and we know that man is not just an object manipulated by other spirits; man has a free will and must be accountable for his own actions. God has given us the ability to choose and direct our own lives and our own eternity. There are demons and angels. However, they inspire or tempt us, they do not control us. (They are

sometimes given permission by God to take control of our bodies, but not our souls and our wills.) Spirits can help us or harm us through inspiration or temptation, but we are responsible for following one or the other.

Materialism, in denying the spiritual influences, has created a dilemma for men who have been given inspirations from the spiritual realm. If this all came from within themselves, then they should be able to reproduce it at will. But, a great work is often followed by many mediocre works or even outright failures. This is the cause of many of the psychosis and mental disorders in some of our best creative minds. One great work and then - nothing. It makes them feel like failures, and this is depressing. If they admit that the great work was an inspiration from outside of themselves from some spiritual being greater than themselves, they are protected from the pride and vanity of attributing it to themselves and taking all the credit for themselves. And, they, therefore are less likely to experience the depression or inadequacy of always falling short of their past works.

In our own lives, we should always remember that whatever is good is from God - not from ourselves. God can and does many good things through us, but the honor and the glory belong to Him - not to us. At most, we can lay claim to having not got in the way of God's work through us. We have allowed ourselves to be His instrument. In this, there is merit and reward, even as it keeps us humble and aware of our own nothingness or unworthiness. On the other side, we can say that the evil begins as a temptation from evil spirits. They may be the origin, but we in accepting it and allowing it make ourselves guilty. Not all influences come to us from higher spiritual beings, we are often inspired or tempted by the world and our own selves. The great works of either good or evil are, however, almost certainly the influences of beings more powerful than ourselves.

We may often wonder if a temptation that we experience is from the devil, the world, or our own fallen nature. This information, while useful to the physician of our souls, is often mere curiosity on our own part and is the cause of still greater evils. For our own part, we should

strive to dismiss all temptations from whatever source they may arise. We should bless ourselves and make use of the Sacraments and sacramentals along with frequent and fervent prayer. These means will drive evil spirits from us. These means will also direct our thoughts above the material world and remove any temptations arising from this source. They will also direct our thoughts above ourselves and thus overcome temptations arising from our own fallen natures. No matter what the source is, the weapons to combat and overcome them are the same.

A common problem with some of the passions is that we pray to God for relief from this or that particular passion, while we are in the throws of the passion, and by directing our mind to not think of this or that temptation, we actually think of it even more than before. In this way, the prayer adds to the temptation rather than decreasing it. On such occasions, we do better to engage our minds and bodies in some other task and return to the prayer when we have distracted our passions and have calmed them a little. In the midst of our impatience, we should not pray:

“God, give me patience and hurry up!” We would be better off setting what we are doing aside for the moment. When the heat of the passion has calmed, then we can ask God for the graces needed and thank Him that we are now in a better frame of mind and soul.



The Sunday Sermon

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

The Sunday Sermon has now become very popular. Subscribers are asking that we send The Sunday Sermon to their friends and relatives. We only ask the small donation of \$10 per year (or whatever you can afford) to help us cover the cost of production and mailing.

Subscribe today for yourself or a friend!

Write to:

The Sunday Sermon
3376 Mount Read Blvd.
Rochester, New York 14616

A Chance to Live

Monsignor John P. Carroll-Abbing

IV

THE LOST CHILDREN OF THE WAR

*"... They had no longer any wish
for play ... for anything ... all they
wanted was a miracle that might
make them warm again ..."*

(Continued)

The officer in charge of the harbor police told me a story a few nights later.

The night was dark. Naples slept, guarded by the sentinels of the anti-aircraft observatories.

On the water close to the harbor, there is an unusual murmur of voices, subdued whisperings:

"Did you get in?"

"Yes."

"Does it float?"

"Sure."

The heads of the two boys appear within a black ring floating on the waves. Then their shoulders, arms, hands. They start to paddle, using slats of wood from broken boxes. The black ring moves. It had been an empty gasoline drum. Now it had turned into a boat.

Thus it was discovered how the merchandise lying around on the

piers kept vanishing, stolen by small ghostly figures that had not been noticed for a long time, until one night someone caught sight of the pairs of bright eyes peering out of each of a number of floating black rings! No wonder that barbed or electrically charged wire had been useless in preventing the mysterious disappearances.

We had long discussions one evening at the Caetani Palace. It just happened that it was a special evening. Christmas!

A certain aura of homesickness hung in the air, dampening the gaiety of the moment. It was reflected in the words of the men, who spoke of their families, their faraway homelands, of old times, the traditional family trees, the gifts, the happiness of children shouting their surprise at what Santa had brought them. Some spoke reverently of the religious character of the holy day. Faraway thoughts that took on special meaning in the atmosphere in which we were living.

Packages, gifts, cakes, cookies had come from across the seas to enliven our spirits. We chatted and exchanged views. Captain Chaplin told of the newest feats of the small vagabonds and on that note, our

conversation widened to include the appalling contrasts in the way of life.

Our room was warm, outside on the square a bitter cold wind blew. We sat around a huge crackling fire. Most of the fireplaces in Naples were cold and dead and on the sidewalks of the streets outside, boys lay huddled together against icy walls in a hopeless effort to find a little warmth.

Something had to be done for these boys. That was obvious. But how and by whom?

The government? How could the government of Italy give any real attention to this problem, when so many other vital ones had to be dealt with, day after day, hour after hour? The whole of Italy was starving, millions of refugees were scattered, vast territories had been rendered uninhabitable by buried mines. Miles of fertile lands had been changed into malaria-infested swamps. Hospitals, homes were completely ruined or partly so. The cases of tuberculosis were growing to alarming proportions. And, with it all, no railroads, no mail, no telegraph, no ships . . . unless we counted the ones lying sunk at the bottom of the sea.

The Allies? The war was not yet over and any means offered to this work would be detrimental to the war effort. A great deal had been done. Two hundred grams of

bread and much food was being distributed daily and this entailed not only expense, but tremendous organization. The Allies could not possibly do more for the time being.

The colonel, a man with a quick tongue and an ever-ready joke, always found a way of giving his opinion.

“What I would like to know is this,” he remarked, “what is an Irishman doing here if he can’t solve a simple problem like this?”

His words, said as a joke, held a spark of truth. I felt that each one of us had a great obligation, even if in a limited way, to save the children. I determined to do whatever lay in my power, to spare the little ones greater tragedies, to bring back into their hearts and souls a knowledge of kindness, hope, and love.

With this thought to guide me, I returned to Rome. What could be done? The important thing was to start.

Time worked against me. The American Relief for Italy took up a great deal of my day. I was also president of the Italian Medical Commission for the distribution of medical aid. My offices were crammed with thousands of people, mothers with husbands and sons in foreign prisoner-of-war camps, Jews patiently and unavailingly seeking news of dear ones, homeless children, men out of work. As director of Papal Medical Relief,

I was in charge of a vast network of medical dispensaries, while new centers were daily being set up: dispensaries for children suffering from vitamin deficiencies, centers for the cure of pernicious anemia, for diabetes, for heart diseases, and centers for the battle against malaria.

It was useless for me to think that I could, at least for the moment, dedicate myself directly to the care of the children.

My first thought was to mobilize all available energies, such as existing institutions, in tackling the problem. During the course of my work, I had close contact with hundreds of orphanages throughout Italy. I wrote to them or had collaborators call on them to discuss the possibility of their opening their doors to a large number of children, so as to take as many as possible of the wandering children from the streets.

“In the conditions under which we are working at present, we might be able to take in more boys. The trouble, however, lies in the fact that we do not have a place for them to sleep,” wrote the head of one of the Institutions.

“We have plenty of room,” wrote the director of another, “but we have no beds, no mattresses, no blankets.”

“The great obstacle is the lack of food,” concluded a third.

I noticed how each letter spoke of a different need. This carried the possibility of doing something concrete toward solving the problems of each one. All I had to do was to find and send to each locality whatever was missing and the lack of which prevented the Home from accepting more children.

It became apparent that a group of people would have to volunteer to seek out, to obtain, and finally to distribute the necessary items to each Institute.

Thus came into being the “Opera del Ragazzo della Strada” (Foundation for Homeless Boys).

The beginning had to be small. It was useless to look for new relief goods. Such foreign agencies as might have similar material would already have formed their own plan for distributing it.

I knew, however, that a great number of bales that had been brought from America had been ruined in the holds of the ships that had been flooded by war actions during the voyages. I asked the Italian National Agency for the redistribution of these discarded and moldy bales of clothing. Hospitals that had bought new beds before the war brought up the old rusty ones from the basements. Other beds were sent to us by the fire department; old broken-down cots by the army; and kitchen utensils, old cups, saucers, and plates were obtained from the Swiss Relief Agency, which had

collected them in a house-to-house canvas. Later on, as the American Red Cross dismantled its Army Clubs, it turned over to us abundant equipment.

Our storehouses slowly filled with moldy clothes, rags, dishes, cups, bowls of all sizes and shapes, broken down beds, cots. There were a lot of shoes, but they all needed repairing and it was not easy to find a matching pair.

As the offerings came, the work of selecting, remaking, mending, cleaning went on unceasingly.

The beds were repaired and varnished, the canvas of the cots changed, the thousands of pieces of clothing, washed, taken apart, cut to a new measurement and made over.

Buttons by the hundreds were cleaned and sorted. Burlap bags were carefully pulled apart thread by thread and knitted into socks and stockings. Tables and chairs and chests were submitted to a process of rejuvenation. In the workrooms, men and women busied themselves making coats and suits and trousers. Clothing for more than twenty thousand boys was the result.

There was great need of wool. To a Committee of Women, we gave the task of collecting any and every oddment of old wool, fit only for the rag bag. They succeeded so well that ten thousand sweaters came out of our workrooms, after the wool had been unraveled, rewound, and

knitted.

Sisters were in charge in workroom and storeroom and worked with zeal and amazing speed. My old friends from the Hospital of Monserrato gave of their time and their help at our offices, free of charge. The lawyer and the trolley-car motorman, the state employee and the banker pledged four and five hours work a day and they reported to us faithfully after their day's work was done. Institutes that took care of the washing and sewing of wearing apparel were the only group offered any payment and this only under the guise of food for those they sheltered.¹ The food we obtained came principally from American Relief for Italy, Inc., which also guaranteed a daily ration of milk to one hundred and eighty thousand children.

The close collaboration of rich and poor accomplished an astounding miracle of charity and brotherly love.

Our work did not keep us locked in an office. In order to organize the whole into a unit, we traveled throughout Italy four days a week, from the northernmost region to the most distant tip of Sicily.

Everywhere we went, we visited
1 As statistical information, during the first year of its life, "L'Opera del Ragazzo della Strada" was able to distribute 190,000 pieces of clothing, 258,000 sheets, blankets, and towels, 22,000 beds and pieces of furniture, and about 7,000 tons of foodstuffs.

hundreds of Institutes and hospitals. In every town, we came in contact with children and more children. I had plenty of opportunity for studying the problem in its local and general aspect.

Rome had its own particular problem, because of the mixed character of its youthful population. A crowd of youngsters had poured into the center from the outlying slum suburbs, adding their number to that of the children of the evacuees who had come to Rome in the hundreds of thousands and the boys who had followed on the heels of the Allied armies.

Here, as in the southern cities, these boys were well trained in the art of jumping onto military trucks and at regular intervals pushing off some of the bales and boxes and bags they carried. They knew the ways of black-market procedure, of illicit trading. They organized themselves into gangs and robbed homes and market places.

Groups of them were easily distinguishable in the crowded areas, such as the railroad stations and the shopping districts. These places had been well chosen, for the Allied soldiers frequented them in great numbers. The railroad station, with its freight trains, provided them with booty aplenty and at night, the empty cars gave them shelter.

In the larger squares, favorite spots

for the black market, it was not difficult to obtain almost anything. Cigarettes, soap, razor blades, anything!

The root of the evil lay not so much in their own initiative as in the power of an organization, directed by a group of adults who ran few risks but took full advantage of the misery of these youngsters.

Although living these adventurous lives, the children were still not wholly lost. Under their hard shells, often fictitious ones, beat hearts that were still clean and that could be reached. However, it was easy to see that unless it were possible to tear them from the life they led they would soon be entirely corrupted:

I met one of them in the courtyard of St. Damascus in the Vatican one day. As I came out of the Palace, I noticed him talking with my chauffeur. He was about fourteen, not very tall for his age and, as he talked, he had a faraway look in his eyes. Compared to many others I had met, he was fairly well dressed, although his jacket was shabby and his shoes were too large for his feet. I listened to the story. At first he spoke haltingly, but then the words began to come out like a flowing stream. I wondered how many times he had had to repeat his story in the last few weeks. His account was full, detailed, anticipating all questions.

“I was born in Ethiopia and we

lived happily together, my father, my mother, and I. Addis Ababa was my native town. Once in a while we went to a show. School wasn't bad. I had a lot of friends there and we had fun. We used to play in the clean, white yard of the school. . . ."

Then the war had struck. Bombs fell on his home. In the small cottage in the midst of the shattered new furniture lay the bodies of his father and mother.

He spoke more slowly now, stopping now and again as if to swallow the knot in his throat.

In 1942, he was brought to Italy from Africa with other Italian refugees. He traveled alone and he was alone on the pier, at Naples, where no one came to meet him.

The law required everyone to be searched. In his pocket, the guards found a letter an Englishman in Africa had asked him to mail in Italy. It was addressed to a friend of his.

The boy protested his innocence, his complete ignorance of what the letter might contain.

"I didn't know . . . I didn't know," I kept telling them, "but they wouldn't believe me."

Dazed by the strange accusations, he wept and pleaded. He was not believed and was sent to the North to a concentration camp. He was eleven, the others with him were much, much older. In solitude he

learned hard lessons. At the camp, everyone was too busy to stretch out a hand in sympathy to a lonely child.

In 1943 — he was twelve then — they sent him, along with grown men, to work on the defenses of the Brenner Pass. For the first time in his short life, he experienced the bitterness of cold weather, the biting cold of the Alps that crept into his body accustomed to the warm sun of Africa. His young hands became callous, his arms ached, his feet tore and bled, as he mixed cement with a long-handled tool or made trip after trip carrying the hod filled with stones on his thin shoulders.

Months passed. Each day he grew more worn, thinner, weaker, but the hardships and the work never ended.

The Allies came. An American officer questioned him. Amazement grew in the officer's eyes as he heard the boy's story.

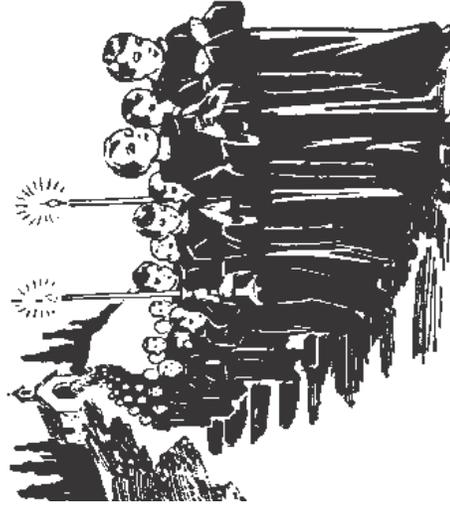
"But I have an aunt living in Rome."

"Is this really so?"

"Yes, here's her name."

The officer was finally persuaded and the boy left for the capital after a short wait.

To be continued.



Franciscan Saints

FEBRUARY 12

THE SERVANT OF GOD
STEPHEN ECKERT
Confessor; First Order

Another child of St. Francis of our own day, Father Stephen Eckert, was born in Dublin, Canada, on April 28, 1869. He received the habit of St. Francis among the Capuchins in Detroit, Michigan, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1896. For several years he labored in New York and was highly esteemed as a missionary, confessor, and retreat-master.

The glory of the metropolis and the honor accorded him there were not agreeable to his humble disposition. He was attracted to the poor and the outcast. On his request, his superiors appointed him to take charge of the Mission of St. Benedict the Moor, for Negroes, in Milwaukee. There Father Stephen felt completely at home.

His iron constitution, his gift of

oratory, his unlimited optimism, and his invincible trust in God he placed at the complete service of the colored people. He was determined, cost what it might, to raise their cultural level and to promote their religious and moral life. With this in mind, he brought his influence to bear on both the Negroes and the white people. To the former, he was a father, with the latter, he was the spokesman of the despised and oppressed black race. He left no opportunity pass to destroy prejudice and promote understanding and love for the Negro.

On a journey devoted to that purpose, he contracted pneumonia, which caused his death on February 16, 1923. One of the last utterances of this apostle of love was this:

“Here I lie and do nothing, and meanwhile thousands of souls are being lost!” The many answers to prayer that have been attributed to his intercession have caused the process of his beatification to be introduced.

ALL TO ALL

1. It is Christ-like to become all to all. All men are one in God: “Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?” (Mal. 2:10) All men are one in our Saviour: “Christ died for all” (2 Cor. 5:15). How right it was, then, of Father Stephen to interest himself as much in the colored people as in their white fellowmen! — Let us never guide our actions by the race or nationality, but rather by the souls of men.

2. All such discrimination is unchristian. Our Lord points that out in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The latter did not ask the victim with sectarian narrowness: Do you pray in Jerusalem or on Mount Garizim? He did not insist on the victim’s nationality and ask: Are you a Jew or a Samaritan? Neither did he calculate on exploiting the man and ask: What will you give me for my services? Such discrimination should never be

made by a true Christian. — Do you have to reproach yourself with unchristian conduct in this matter?

3. When shall we have become all to all? When we have been filled with a spirit of love and of peace. We shall have to sing more than our national anthems, we shall have to sing the hymns to the Holy Ghost. And any modern league of nations shall have to permit itself to be guided by the Holy Ghost, just as did that first league of nations at Jerusalem. Only then will the nations attain to that measure of success which this latter achieved, and become “one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). — Do not forget to pray much to the Holy Ghost in these days of ours which are so devoid of peace, that peace, love, and unity may finally reign among the nations.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O God, who didst send the Holy Ghost upon Thy apostles, grant to Thy people the effects of their ardent prayers, so that Thou mayest grant peace to those whom Thou hast favored with the gift of faith. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

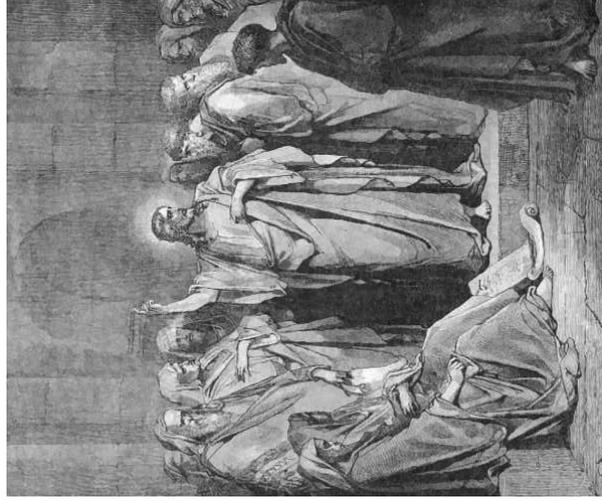
OR,

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 XIX. LESSONS WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR SAVIOR.

We, all of us, know (this is one of the earliest lessons, that was taught us; and a lesson which through life, has been incessantly inculcated to us) — that it is our essential duty to labor, in all the series of our actions, to imitate our Divine Redeemer. He came down from heaven, and lived amongst us, in order that He might be our model. He chose to resemble us, that we might resemble Him.

We have, therefore, in Him a living law; an animated rule

of conduct; and whosoever does not endeavor to live up to it, although he is a Christian in name, is not a Christian in reality. Hence, we should always keep His dear image before our eyes. The habitual contemplation of the instructive portrait would urge us on to piety, — would inspire us with patience under our trials; with fortitude under our temptations; and with consistency in all our conduct. Knowing too that, if we wisely look for salvation, we must transfer into ourselves the features of the divine original, — we should, hence, on all occasions, be careful never to do anything that would defile, or yet disfigure, the beauty of the copy.

THE SERAPH

But, whilst we thus make it our care to keep the sacred image constantly before our eyes, it is at the same time our particular duty — because these are its most striking features — to fix them with particular attention upon the sufferings of the Holy Victim. These are the parts and portions of the portrait which, beyond all others, are calculated to move our hearts and to awaken our sensibility—to convince us of the enormity of sin; and the infinite value of our salvation. In reality, there is no possible object, — no pulpit however eloquent — that speaks both to our hearts and our understandings such unutterable things as do the sufferings of Jesus tormented for our sins; and expiring, for our sake, upon the altar of the cross. The wonder is, that, knowing as we do the immense price at which our redemption has been purchased and the immortal blessings which it has secured to us, if we please to make them ours — the wonder is, that we do not constantly or at least very frequently make them the favorite subjects of our meditations.

I. One of the chief motives, (we remarked this in the preceding Consideration) that induced our benevolent Redeemer to suffer all that He did, both during the

course of His life and in the series of His passion, was *love* — that intense and ardent solicitude, with which, as the tenderest of Fathers, He longed, and labored, for the happiness of His children. Therefore, the lesson — the great duty — which in return for all this kindness, He inculcates to us, is — that we, in like manner, should cherish in our hearts the *love* of Him. Love is, indeed, the only tribute, that He asks for from us. If we give Him this, He is satisfied. If we refuse it, He is justly indignant. The fires of hell are lighted up but to punish the unkind denial.

Let us then, often consider with ourselves, how well He has merited this trifling offering. He has done and sacrificed everything for our sake. He has preferred us to Himself, — even hating His own Life, in order to make us happy. For, what is the case? To suffer in the room of another is to love such individual better than one's self. And to die for him is to prefer his life to one's own. It is the highest act of heroism, that friendship can perform; or that our reason can conceive. Well, and such precisely as this has been the goodness of our Savior in our regard. He has loved us so much, as not only to suffer and die for

our sake; and in our room, but moreover in order still farther to manifest His love for us, He has chosen to add to His sufferings every kind of ignominy; and to His death every form of cruelty, that human malice could suggest.

And let us, too, consider well — for this again is what ought to affect us sensibly — first, *Who He is, Who* has loved us thus; and secondly, *who we* are for whom He has chosen to do so much. And who, then, is this kind and generous Being? Oh, mystery! the, greatest, that religion adores! Why; He is the very Lord Himself of heaven — the King of Glory; the Prince of the princes of the earth; the Judge of the living, and the dead. Such is our Divine Redeemer. And who are we, for whose sake He is thus pleased to offer Himself a sacrifice? Why, the mere worms of the earth — dust, ashes, nothing. It would even be well if we were not something more worthless still than all this. For, we are sinners; rebels; undutiful, and ungrateful, wretches, undeserving of any favor, and meriting only hatred, punishment, and hell. Such are we, in relation to our Blessed Savior. And yet, it is in order to save these mean and guilty creatures that this great and eternal Being lays down His

own Sacred Life. For a friend to die for a friend, — although this is the noblest of all acts of generosity — is a thing, that does not so much surprise us. But, to die for an enemy — to be at once the person offended, and, at the same time, the repairer of the offence — to be able to punish the criminal; and yet, become the very victim to save him — there is surely, in all this, a measure of love, which is alike astonishing to our reason, as it should be captivating to our hearts — a love, such as no other heart could feel save that of the kind and generous Jesus. And can we then — these circumstances considered — can we be so lost to all sentiments of gratitude as not to own that, in return for all this goodness and all these blessings we ought ardently to love this eternal Benefactor?

II. The next lesson, we have equally observed, that the sufferings of Our Saviour inculcate to us, is to impress upon our minds a deep sense of the guilt of sin; and to convince us of the urgent obligation which we are under both of carefully avoiding its contagion; and of punishing ourselves for its commission. The case is, (this is a point, which we should often consider in the mystery of our Redemption) that

between the guilt of sin and the sufferings of Jesus there exists a direct proportion because the measure of a real atonement is adapted always to the measure of the evil, or to the crime which it is designed to expiate. Whence it follows, that, as the sufferings of the Divine Victim were infinite in their value, so consequently must sin — for which they were offered up as a due satisfaction — be infinite also in its enormity.

It is, accordingly, by this rule that we should study to form our judgment of nature, and guilt; of our offenses. Had sin been a less criminal thing than it is, — then less likewise would have been the severity of the atonement offered up to expiate it. Sin, therefore, (let us on all occasions remember this) is the greatest of all possible evils. It is for this reason, that the sacred Victim — as taking its guilt upon Himself — was pleased — or rather obliged — to allow Himself to be treated so cruelly. It was sin, that bored His hands and feet and that nailed Him to the cross.

From these considerations, then, let us deduce this twofold lesson or conclusion — in the first place, to shun with the utmost caution every danger and even shadow of vice; and next, to

punish ourselves for having been so undutiful as ever to have admitted it into our hearts. We thus see, that, each time we sin, — that is, each time that we commit any aggravated offence — we are guilty of an act of such heinous malice that it required the death of a God to make satisfaction for it; — of such malice that not all the sufferings of all mankind — not all the labors, and merits of the whole creation could suffice to form an adequate compensation for it. With these ideas often present to our minds, it would be next to impossible that we should be so imprudent and so ungenerous as willfully to commit it. Or if unhappily we do now carry its poison in our bosoms — distressed at the painful thought we should at once with the most earnest efforts, endeavor to eradicate it. And let us, too, frequently reflect that whenever we do consent to any grievous sin, we then — besides violating the laws of morals, of piety, and gratitude — we moreover, absolutely contemn the Victim that has died to save us. We trample upon the Blood that has been shed to purify us. These are reflections, which should be always present to our minds and deeply engraved upon our hearts.

III. Another lesson which is, alike,

taught us by the last conflicts of Our Saviour, is this — that it is our duty — if not absolutely to cherish the love of sufferings — at least, to submit with calm resignation to those occasional crosses which we are doomed to meet with here. This, indeed, is a lesson which is not only inculcated to us by the painful tragedy of His death, but by the whole series of His instructive life. We see, that, during the entire length of the three and thirty years, which He spent amongst us, never did He choose to taste anything that was formed to gratify the senses; or to flatter inclination. He fed on sorrows, and hardships, and distress. He did this, in order that His conduct might serve as a model for our imitation. “*He suffered for us,*” says St. Peter, “*that we might follow His example; and tread in His footsteps.*” Whence also St. Paul declares to us that, if we hope to share in His triumphs, we must share likewise in His sufferings. These, again, are maxims which both the example of this blessed Being and His repeated injunctions press eloquently upon our attention. But ah; where now even in those societies which we consider virtuous, do we find either the love of sufferings or the practice

of cheerful resignation? In vain almost do we look around us now to trace anywhere the exercise of these once generally cultivated virtues. We now see little else in the walks of life but delicacy, softness, luxury, and the love of pleasure — men aspiring, it is true, at salvation — but aspiring at it with hardly one Christian title that can seem to merit or secure it for them.

However, although the law of suffering is thus engraved in characters so deep and legible; — although we are born from the wounds of Jesus, and are the children of His blood — still, fortunately, it is not required of us, either that we should undergo any torments, or even seek any hardships that are equal or alike to His. Not even are we called upon to sustain any sufferings; like those of the martyrs — or like those, which, but a few years past were, in this country, the portion of our own heroic ancestors. Such as these are not the trials, to which we are either now exposed; or which the Divine Justice imposes on us. No; simply to bear with resignation the few difficulties and disappointments, which we accidentally meet within society; — to be patient in sickness; submissive in poverty; cheerful

under privations — these are the sufferings, which alone, we are now called upon to bear — these the victories which now hold the place of martyrdom. But, above all, to weep and grieve for our sins; to offer up to God the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, of a heart deeply wounded at the sight of its past ingratitude — this is the blood — the only blood, — which, in order to imitate the Passion of our Savior, we are in these days, required to shed. We need no tyrants to try our virtue, nor to exercise our patience. Our nature itself has sufficient weaknesses; the world sufficient injustices; business sufficient cares; even favor, and success have sufficient inconstancies, both to afford us the opportunities for suffering and to fulfill its law. Let us, therefore, — knowing that we are the disciples of a suffering Master — regenerated from those veins, which for our sake and for our example, have been so cruelly mangled — let us at all events, feel this — that to look with anything like rational confidence to salvation, amid the dalliances of pleasure or the charms of sensual indulgence, is an insult to the law that is framed to save us. Or rather, let us sensibly feel this — that if we wisely hope to reign with Jesus,

we must suffer with Him.

IV. Besides the above lessons, which the mystery of our Saviour's sufferings thus eloquently teaches us, there are, moreover, many others, in which this sacred Being presents Himself to us as the model in which we ought to study both the obligation and the method of cultivating every form of Christian virtue. He here teaches us the whole science of salvation. Thus, in His *poverty*, we are instructed to despise the riches, and satisfactions of the world — the rich, not to set their hearts upon their riches; the poor, to be contented in their lowly situation. Such was the poverty of Jesus, that, although all the treasures of nature were His — yet, He had not where to repose His head. In His humility — although He is the supreme Lord of heaven and earth — He points out to us the sinfulness of pride and the folly of all worldly vanity. He even, in order to inculcate and enforce the necessity of keeping ourselves humble, became, “*as a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.*” By His *meekness*, He teaches us, not only to repress all the swellings of passion but in silence and calm submission to put up with the insults, of injuries, which the insolence or the injustices, of

men, may chance to inflict upon us. “*He was as the sheep, led to the slaughter; and as the lamb before his shearer, not opening his mouth.*” By His fastings and mortification, we are animated to *crucify the flesh with its vices, and concupiscences*: by His prayers, and retirement to cultivate fervor; and to cherish the love of solitude, and meditation.

Thus it is, that in the school of our suffering *Redeemer*; and above all, from the pulpit of His cross — we are taught not only to love Him who has loved us so much — not only to avoid sin, which was the cause of all His torments — we are taught also, and encouraged to practice every kind of virtue. Let us, therefore, consider well; and placing daily, this Holy Model before our eyes — let us (although we, of course,

cannot come up to the perfection of the Original) let us endeavor to imitate each feature; and to copy into our lives and conduct, as well as we can do it, the traits, and colors of the sacred portrait. This, indeed, is the chief and often repeated injunction of the Divine Being Himself: and it is by this criterion that, on the occasion of the grand assize, our eternal lot will be decided. Our lives will be then compared with the life of Jesus. If the resemblance is correct, the great Judge will then acknowledge us for His own. If they differ, He will reject us as His enemies. If they agree, He will say to each of us: “*Well done, thou good, and faithful, servant:*” thou hast followed My footsteps in the royal, but rugged paths of the cross; and thou shalt share with Me in My triumphs: ‘*Enter into the joy of thy Lord.*’”

Visit the Franciscan Home Page on the internet.

<http://FriarsMinor.org>

<http://franciscanfathers.com>

<http://catholicour.org/>

Our e-mail address is: friars@friarsminor.org

Our blogs with audio sermons:

<http://friarsminor.blogspot.com/>

GENERAL INFORMATION

The SERAPH is sent FREE anywhere in the United States upon request. Cost of production and mailing is borne by your fellow - Catholics who are concerned for your soul. They desire that you, too, would become informed as to TRUE DOCTRINE AND SOUND SPIRITUALITY as Roman Catholics totally loyal to the Apostolic See.

Won't YOU join them in this world wide apostolate?

SUBSCRIPTION

Please note the expiration on your label You will find the expiration of your subscription immediately following your name on the address label.

- A1 Benefactor Subscription donation of \$50 or more.
- B1 Supporting Subscription \$20 donation.
- C1 Free requested Subscription.
- Tr Trial Issue. You will receive only 3 issues unless you request to receive more.

Example: 01 - 18 A1 indicates a subscription which will expire in January 2018. The A1 indicates that it is a benefactor subscription.

Please Note: There is an annual request for renewal.

Back Issues: Due to the extra cost in postage and handling, we must ask a minimum donation of \$5.00 for available copies, and \$6.00 for any copies that must be photocopied.

Most Rev. Bishop Giles O.F.M.
SERAPH - 3376 Mount Read Blvd
Rochester, NY 14616

Your Excellency: Here's my offering of \$_____ to help defray the cost of publishing the SERAPH - to help you keep on sending it to someone who might otherwise never be able to benefit from it.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

The **SERAPH**

3376 Mount Read Blvd

Rochester, New York 14616-4344

NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

ROCHESTER, NY

PERMIT NO. 27