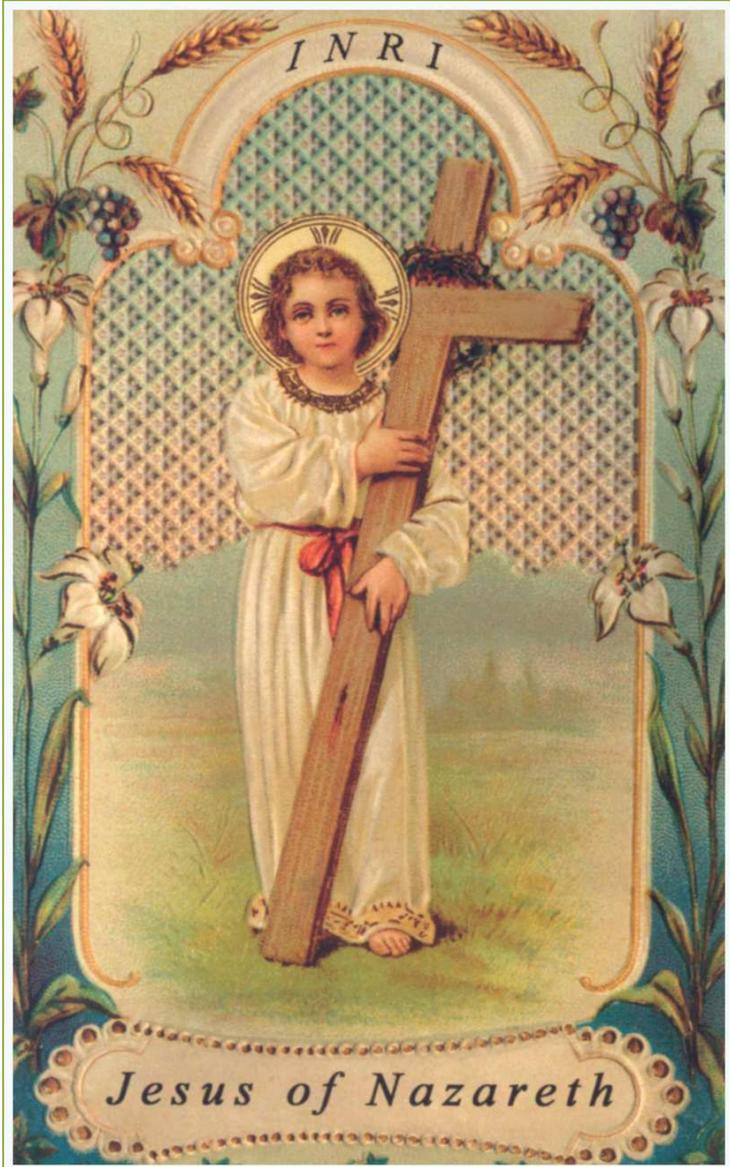


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The **SERAPH** seeks to serve and unite in spirit all Roman Catholics faithful to tradition and all men of good will for the betterment of society according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

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Unity With God Among Men

Bishop Giles, OFM

Jesus has prayed that we may be one, (John 17,21) yet we most certainly do not appear to be one. The True Church is one. There is only One Lord God, and one baptism. (Ephesians 4,5) We are all born from one man – Adam. How is it that there are so many varied and contradictory beliefs and practices? We often observe this in families when the question is asked: how can children born of the same parents and raised in the same home, be so different from one another?

It has been our cross to bear with countless schisms in the Church and in the world today. It seems imperative to most minds in the world today to “fix the blame.” When the fire is raging and destroying everything; instead of putting out the conflagration, we waste time and energy trying to find the cause of this destruction. It seems that we should first put out the fire, and then look for causes or blame. It is necessary that we search out causes so that we may avoid future misfortunes and destruction. However, in an emergency, we need to stop the immediate destruction first.

In the world, we find political parties from one end of the spectrum to the other. We find every perversity espoused and promoted in various degrees by one or more worldly sect or group. We cannot even seem to agree on what is right and wrong. Objective reality no longer exists in the minds of many in the world today. Everything is now subjective and separated from reality. So many “intelligentsia” speak of this group’s truth as opposed to that group’s truth. In the depravity of their minds, they see not one Truth, but many “truths.”

Tragically, the same has taken place in the realm of religion, doctrine, and morals. It is not just a division of Pagan, Jew, and Christian; but, it has become a many-headed hydra. It was once said that there are as many opinions as there are heads; and today, we see that there are just about as many religions as there are people. Our society often encourages people to not belong to any “organized religion” but to worship God in their “own way.” The entire concept of promoting

the true Faith seems to have been lost. The command of Christ to go forth and make disciples of all men, (Matthew 28,19) is now obsolete and perhaps even extinct.

It is understandable that the non-Catholics are divided and sub-divided in so many ways. It is a mockery of God that so many profess to be Catholic, yet are divided. We find many “Traditionalists” of varying opinions and positions each condemning the false “ecumenism” of the Modernists; yet, there is a surprising “ecumenism” among themselves. Not a oneness in faith, worship, or even discipline, but rather an unhealthy indifferentism.

We can readily see the “cause” of all this in the words of St. Paul. In turning away from God, God abandons us to a reprobate sense. (Romans 1,28) From this follows all manner of evil and perversity. We see this as the cause of such things as murder of the pre-born, divorce, fornication, adultery, sodomy, bestiality, pedophilia, homosexuality, etc. In the realm of religion, it is similarly manifest from the Satanist, the Pagan, the Jew, the Protestant, the Modernist “Catholic,” the Traditionalist

“Catholic,” etc. A reprobate sense has fallen upon our world today in both the physical and spiritual realms. At the root of all this, we see that men have forgotten God and are only concerned with their own desires.

Here is the emergency, and here is what we perceive to be the cause of the emergency; but, what is the solution? As we would say in the world, “okay, so now what?” The shepherd has been struck and there is no united leadership; there is division and schism, propagated and fed by: envy, jealousy, anger, hatred, etc. Are we to embrace a false ecumenism so that we can have a semblance of unity? Can we just overlook the false doctrines, worship and practices of others for the sake of “peace?” Definitely NOT! Are we to renounce our reason and unite with them? Definitely NOT! Are we to hate and detest those who are following wrong doctrine, practices and worship? Again, we say: Definitely NOT! God says that we must love our enemies. (Matthew 5, 44) We must love our neighbors. (Luke 10, 25-37) What demands does the love of the sinner impose upon us? To admonish, correct, rebuke when necessary; but, to do all this with charity. It is with true love in

our hearts and minds, that we will be able to accomplish anything positive in the regards of putting out this evil conflagration that is before us. In all things, we must imitate Jesus Christ, Who came not to condemn and destroy, but to save that which was lost. Harsh words seldom obtain a receptive hearing, on the contrary, they often find retaliation with even stronger language. Unity does not seem to be the goal in this situation; but rather division, and sadly, it often succeeds in this. There is no doubt that sometimes a strong word from someone who is respected and loved will obtain the desired effect of interrupting an evil and obtaining unity, but this does not appear to happen very often in the world today. There was a time when people feared the condemnation of schism, but today all fear of this censure seems nonexistent.

Christ did use strong language against the Scribes and Pharisees in His day, (Matthew 23) because these men understood their crimes. We know that He is God and used the correct method for everything that He did. For those who fell into sin rather than sought it out, Jesus was filled with compassion and mercy towards them. The Church uses the same method

when She condemns heresy and the promoters of heresy, but She has compassion upon those who have been deceived or led astray by these errors. We are not God, nor does God show us the hearts of all men. Where there is doubt, we should give the benefit of doubt, rather than condemn. We should assume weakness or ignorance, rather than malice. Seeing a poor sinner, we should be filled with compassion and mercy towards them. We should be eager to relieve them of their evil motivated by true love for them. Even those who attack and abuse us need to be loved. For God has commanded us to love our enemies and to do good to those who persecute us. (Matthew 5,44) If He could pray upon the Cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing," (Luke 23,34) how can we not do the same? To love those who are in error or are doing evil, is not the same as condoning their actions. To love them, means that we seek through every means given to us to lead them to the Truth and God.

We have observed that gentle admonitions are often quickly dismissed and even opens us up to the mockery of being simple, backward, uneducated, etc. After,

such insult and injury, are we not then justified in stronger rebukes? Insults against us should be ignored. Christ stood silently in the face of false accusations against His Human Person, and only became angry with the insults to God.

We return to the question, what are we to do? We cannot ignore evil, we cannot condone evil, strong words have lost their effect. Should we just walk away and consign these souls to eternal reprobation? This flies in the face of the instruction of: where there is life there is still hope. (Ecclesiastes 9,3-5) So we must do something, but what?

It is time to: pray, do penance, to make and offer sacrifices for our sins as well as for the sins of our loved ones, our neighbors, our country men, our enemies, and even for everyone in this world. We do not know which souls will be saved, so we strive for the salvation of all. The greatest sinners will enter into Heaven even before the “just.” (Matthew 21,31) All that is required is that they return to the love of God. Which souls will receive grace due to our efforts, we do not know. Will those that are lost because we did not love and

help them have a valid complaint against us? How will we answer Jesus when He asks us if we have loved Him and we have not loved one another?

To fight fire with fire; evil with evil; only makes for bigger fires and greater evil. As St. Paul says so eloquently: “Now is the acceptable time,” (2 Corinthians 6,2) so, now is the time to put water on the fire, to fight evil with goodness. The proud and the angry should be “fought” with the charity of humility, meekness, and mildness. Above and beyond this physical fight, we must enter into the spiritual battle with our own penitential prayers, mortifications, and sacrifices. We must do this for our own souls as well as for those who are dependent upon us. We ask that this become our New Year’s resolution. Not a year of false peace, nor a year of presumptuous mercy, or indifference; but rather a year of penance and pleading before the Throne of God for His forgiveness and mercy. Through these efforts, we may hope for true unity in faith, worship, and morals here on earth; and everlasting blessedness in Heaven.

The Family in 2017

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

Part 1: The Planned Destruction

There has been much written concerning the family and its importance in society and the Church. It is certainly understandable considering the vital role the family has in this world.

The family has been under attack for many years by a variety of enemies of the Church and Natural and Moral Law. These attacks have been unprecedented in the 20th and 21st centuries. The world has witnessed a relentless warring against fatherhood, motherhood, and children in a variety of ways. We are now able to look back and see when this modern-day battle began and who was responsible.

Note: Portions of the following section on Margaret Sanger (founder of the American Birth Control League) are taken from *Margaret Sanger Quotes, History, and Biography* (liveaction.org).

In 1911, Margaret Sanger moved to New York City where she was heavily influenced by anarchist, socialist, and labor activists. She began joining and participating in radical groups and causes. Already in 1914, she promoted birth control in her own paper, *The Women Rebel*, along with violence to achieve political, economic and social goals.

In October 1916, Sanger opened America's first birth control clinic. Located in Brownsville, New York, the clinic permanently closed a month later, after Sanger was charged with maintaining a public nuisance. In February 1917, she was convicted and given a thirty day prison sentence.

Also in February 1917, the first issue of Sanger's journal, *The Birth Control Review*, was published. She was *The Review's* editor until 1929, and used her editorials to promote birth control and eugenics. For Sanger, these issues were inseparable.

She had a particular desire to eliminate the Black Race whom she considered too unfit to have children and raise families. The statistics today confirm her original intent is still carried out. Over 30% of all abortions are performed on black women and close to 40% of black pregnancies end in abortion. When one considers that the blacks in the United States comprise 13% of the population (2015), these abortions along with an unknown number who practice artificial birth control, this race is being eliminated simply because of the lies of those who are also working to undermine the family and marriage.

In 1921, Sanger founded the American Birth Control League, which (following a 1939 merger

with the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau and then a 1942 name change) became Planned Parenthood Federation of America. The 1942 name change became “necessary” to disassociate her organizations and work from Nazi Germany who had previously taken her work on birth control and eugenics and used it for their own evil purposes. (*Editor’s note: Our readings indicate that all the modern nations at that time were practicing the evils of eugenics -- not just Nazi Germany. It appears from history that the Germans felt pressure to preserve themselves from extermination after WWI, and for this reason employed the “science” of eugenics for self-preservation.*)

In her later years, Sanger still believed that there were people “who never should have been born at all.” In a 1957 interview with Mike Wallace, she said, “I think the greatest sin in the world is bringing children into the world – that have disease from their parents, that have no chance in the world to be a human being practically. Delinquents, prisoners, all sorts of things just marked when they’re born. That to me is the greatest sin – that people can – can commit.”

She continued to write, speak to various groups, and expand Planned Parenthood. Her dislike of blacks, the poor and others whom she considered to be unfit for society continued to the end of her life. She died in 1966.

Margaret Sanger’s influence in the United States and around the world is nothing short of

disastrous. She was nothing less than a spokeswoman for Satan. The spiritual damage cannot be measured in human terms. She not only promoted artificial birth control, but undoubtedly had a direct influence on abortion and morality in general.

The number of lives lost through birth control and abortion is known to God alone. If the estimate of one billion lives lost through “known” abortions worldwide since about 1973 is accurate, how many were prevented or aborted via the various artificial birth control methods devised by man and conceived in Hell?

Note: Portions of the following section on Freemasonry are taken from *Dressing with Dignity* by Colleen Hammonds.

The second organized effort to destroy the family was actually the first. The Freemasons set in motion in the early part of the 19th century to undermine female morality as a means of ultimately destroying the Church.

It must be said that although there is no evidence to confirm such a claim, one must wonder if Margaret Sanger was a Freemason or at least working with them. Is it merely a coincidence the timeline for her and the Freemasons is nearly identical? One would think not.

“In order to destroy Catholicism, it is necessary to commence by suppressing woman... But since we cannot suppress woman, let us

corrupt her with the Church...” (Letter of Vindez to Nubius, pen names of two leaders of the *Alta Vendita*, the highest lodge of the Italian Carbonari, Masonic revolutionaries, Aug. 9, 1838.)

It has been understood by various individuals in history that women are the moral compass of society. A moral woman will produce a moral society; an immoral woman will bring about an immoral society. This is clearly seen today.

How were the Freemasons going to corrupt women? By changing the fashions and therefore the morals.

“Religion does not fear the dagger’s point; but it can vanish under corruption. Let us not grow tired of corruption: we may use a pretext, such as sport, hygiene, health resorts. It is necessary to corrupt, that our boys and girls practice nudism in dress. To avoid too much reaction, one would have to progress in a methodical manner: first, undress up to the elbow; then up to the knees; then arms and legs completely uncovered; later, the upper part of the chest, the shoulders, etc. etc.” (International Review on Freemasonry, 1928.)

Fashions began to noticeably change at the turn of the 20th century. It did not take long for the Catholic clergy to take notice and speak out. In 1910, the Archbishop of Paris led a campaign against women’s immodest fashions. Five years later the Church released a General Pastoral Directive stating

that women must be dressed decently at Mass and that the priest may refuse them entrance into the church if they are not dressed properly.

Was the Church aware of this plot to undermine morals? One might possibly answer yes, considering they reacted so quickly to the changes in fashions.

Our Lady of Fatima also said that certain fashions would be introduced “that will offend Our Lord very much.” Jacinta commented later that people who serve God should not follow current fashion trends. Jacinta also said that the Church has no fashions, and that “Our Lord is always the same.”

Slacks appeared on the fashion runways of Paris in 1920. The next year, Pope Benedict XV expressed his shock that women would embrace the current fashion trends and styles of dancing. He wrote, **“One cannot sufficiently deplore the blindness of so many women of every age and condition; made foolish by desire to please, they do not see to what a degree the indecency of their clothing shocks every honest man, and offends God. Most of them would formerly have blushed for those toilettes [outfits] as for a grave fault against Christian modesty; now it does not suffice for them to exhibit them on the public thoroughfares; they do not fear to cross the threshold of the churches, to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and**

even to bear the seducing food of shameful passions to the Eucharistic Table where one receives the heavenly Author of purity. And We speak not of those exotic and barbarous dances recently imported into fashionable circles, one more shocking than the other; one cannot imagine anything more suitable for banishing all the remains of modesty.” (Encyclical Letter *Sacra Propediem*, Jan. 6, 1921.)

In the 1920's, women's clothing styles were taking a radical and revolutionary new look. For the first time in history, women of refinement were seen wearing sleeves above the elbow and hemlines that crawled up to the knee. Remember that Masonic directive: “First, undress up to the elbow; then up to the knees; then arms and legs completely uncovered; later, the upper part of the chest, the shoulders, etc. etc.”

In 1928 Pope Pius XI wrote, “There is a sad forgetfulness of Christian modesty, especially in the life and dress of women.” (Encyclical Letter *Miserentissimus Redemptor*.)

Worldly Catholics and secular society responded by saying that modesty in dress was regulated by “customs and styles of time, place, and circumstances.” They encouraged women to ignore these statements from the Church. Instead, they said, it was society and culture that should dictate what is modest and appropriate.

But in their publications, Freemasons had revealed their motive and plan. The following quote bears repeating:

“Religion does not fear the dagger's point; but it can vanish under corruption. Let us not grow tired of corruption: we may use a pretext, such as sport, hygiene, health resorts. It is necessary to corrupt, that our boys and girls practice nudism in dress. To avoid too much reaction, one would have to progress in a methodical manner: first, undress up to the elbow; then up to the knees; then arms and legs completely uncovered; later, the upper part of the chest, the shoulders, etc. etc.” (International Review on Freemasonry, 1928.)

If you look at the fashion trends since 1928, you can see that styles have very closely followed this strategy. At that time, garments were already up to the elbows and knees.

The year 1928 was also the beginning of Pope Pius XI's Modesty Crusade. It makes one think that he may have known about the plan of Freemasonry. The Modesty Crusade started with a Letter to the Bishops of Italy (August 23, 1928) and was directed primarily at schools run by religious sisters. It spoke against immodest fashions, “which prevail today to the detriment of good breeding...”

Then on January 12, 1930, the Sacred Congregation of the Council, by order of Pope Pius XI,

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issued a Letter to the Bishops that exhorted bishops, priests, nuns, teachers, parents, etc. to insist on modesty in those under their charge. The document concludes with these words:

“Maidens and women dressed immodestly are to be debarred from Holy Communion and from acting as sponsors at the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation; further, if the offense be extreme, they may even be forbidden to enter the church.”

Detailed instructions on modesty of dress for women had been issued on September 24, 1928, by the Cardinal-Vicar (Vicar General) of Pope Pius XI in Rome, Basilio Cardinal Pompili:

“We recall that a dress cannot be called decent which is cut deeper than two fingers’ breadth under the pit of the throat, which does not cover the arms at least to the elbows, and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees. Furthermore, dresses of transparent material are improper.”

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) continued the Modesty Crusade during his pontificate. In an allocution of May 22, 1941 to young Catholic girls during World War II, he urged them not to fall for fashions that had, until then, been worn only by “women of doubtful virtue.” His words are a sobering reminder that the Church is ever mindful of the salvation of souls.

“Numbers of believing and pious women. . . in accepting to follow certain bold fashions, break down, by their example, the resistance of many other women to such fashions, which may become for them the cause of spiritual ruin. As long as these provocative styles remain identified with women of doubtful virtue, good women do not dare to follow them; but once these styles have been accepted by women of good reputation, decent women soon follow their example, and are carried along by the tide into possible disaster.”

The Canadian bishops followed suit in the Spring of 1946, this time admonishing men to wear shirts in public-even at the beach-and to avoid tight trousers.

That summer, Pope Pius XII said, **“Now many girls do not see anything wrong with following certain shameless styles, like so many sheep. They would surely blush if they could only guess the impression they make and the feelings they arouse in those who see them.”** (Allocution to Children of Mary Immaculate, July 17, 1954.)

Pope Pius XII cautioned women that, if certain styles were an occasion of sin for others, it was their duty not to wear them. He also warned mothers to make sure their children were dressed modestly. His timeless admonition sounds as though it could have been written today!

“The good of our soul is more important than that of our body; and we have to prefer the spiritual welfare of our neighbor to our bodily comforts... If a certain kind of dress constitutes a grave and proximate occasion of sin, and endangers the salvation of your soul and others, it is your duty to give it up...

“O Christian mothers, if you knew what a future of anxieties and perils, of ill subdued doubts, of hardly suppressed shame you prepare for your sons and daughters, imprudently getting them accustomed to live scantily dressed and making them lose the sense of modesty, you would be ashamed of yourselves and you would dread the harm you are making for yourselves, the harm which you are causing these children, whom Heaven has entrusted to you to be brought up as Christians.” (Allocution to the Girls of Catholic Action, May 22, 1941.)

Pope Pius XII recognized that women are the moral fiber of society, and he knew that the culture would implode if modesty were not put into practice. “Society reveals what it is by the clothes it wears,” Pius XII said on August 29, 1954. “... An unworthy, indecent mode of dress has prevailed” without any distinction of place, “on beaches, in country resorts, on the streets, etc. Vice necessarily follows upon public nudity...”

The Pope wasn't the only one who had something to say about

fashion's downward spiral. Everyday clothing was using less and less material, and going to the beach was a relatively new pastime that was gaining in popularity. In 1959, Cardinal Pia y Daniel, Archbishop of Toledo, Spain, stated:

“A special danger to morals is represented by public bathing at beaches. . . Mixed bathing between men and women, which is nearly always a proximate occasion of sin and a scandal, must be avoided.”

The Cardinal was simply echoing and reinforcing what the Roman Emperors knew two thousand years ago: mixed swimming leads to promiscuity. That's a long way from where our culture is today, isn't it?

Cardinal Siri, of Genoa, Italy, wrote a letter in 1960 called “Notification Concerning Men's Dress Worn by Women.” He expressed concern that by wearing trousers, women were imitating and competing with men. His concern was that this would bring about in women the mental attitudes of a man, and would modify a woman's gestures, attitudes and behavior.

Padre Pio refused women access to the confessional if their dresses were too short. On the door of the church was this message:

“By Padre Pio's explicit wish, women must enter the confessional wearing skirts at least 8 inches below the knee. It is forbidden to borrow longer

dresses in church and to wear them for the Confessional.”

As one author commented, while fashion designers had skirts climbing to more than eight inches above the knee, Padre Pio warned women to keep their skirts eight inches below the knee.

Comparatively little has been said or written by the Catholic clergy since the 1960's. Pastors began to allow immoral fashions to be worn at Mass, a scandal which continues to this day in the Modernist Church to the moral detriment of numberless clergy and laymen. There certainly is a connection between the loss of the sense of the sacred (faith) and wearing immoral fashions in church.

But this is not only about what is worn in church, but also about what is worn in daily life, especially by women. Over the past fifty to sixty years, we have seen women wear fashions that were once worn only by prostitutes. It started with adult women and now you have teenage girls vying with each other to see who can best look like the underage streetwalker. What is so tragic about this situation is they consider it perfectly acceptable and, therefore, do not see anything wrong with this immoral display of nudity. We have gone well beyond the time when women would not wear any type of under garment as an outer garment, and are seemingly clueless to the damage which is done in society.

The overall picture is one where the sense of modesty is so far removed from the mind of the mob, they would not make decent pagans. It has been noticed for some years that a growing number of women no longer know how to carry themselves or sit properly when wearing a skirt or dress! Apparently, this basic sense of decency is no longer taught by mothers who all too often want to dress like their immoral clueless daughters.

The goals of Margaret Sanger and the Freemasons have unfortunately been accomplished among far too many women. Immoral men have been too willing to promote the degradation of women. Many good women have found it increasingly difficult to find modest dresses and skirts for themselves and their daughters.

The Modernist clergy have allowed women to wear immoral fashions in their once-Catholic churches since at least the late 1960's. How many boys and men have fallen into mortal sin in church because of such scandals? Rarely have any of these men made an attempt to enforce some type of dress code.

The damage to society can hardly be calculated. History has shown that once a nation crosses such moral boundaries it usually is too late to recover and save the country. It would be bad enough if one was considering one country. Sadly, the entire world is engulfed in an ocean of immorality.

To be Continued

The Need for Abstinence

Bishop Giles, OFM

The Catholic practice of abstinence can be traced back to the very beginning of the human race. In the Garden of Paradise, Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the fruit of a certain tree. (Gen. 3,3) The Old Testament is filled with things that the Chosen People were to avoid eating. The practice of abstaining from the flesh of warm blooded animals on Fridays is of apostolic origin. This was obviously done as a small penance and reminder of the Sacrifice of Jesus upon the Cross.

Abstinence and fasting often go hand in hand, but they are two very different things. Abstinence is refraining from the eating of certain things; fasting is eating less than is normally consumed. Another way of considering it is: abstinence is concerned with quality (what kinds or types of things) and fasting is concerned with quantity (how much).

The Israelites were forbidden to eat certain kinds of animals that were labeled as “unclean.” (Lev. 11) In the New Testament, we learn that all that God has made is clean. (Acts 10,15) Swine was

considered unclean not because of the animal itself. It was unclean for the Israelites because if they disobeyed God’s command they, themselves, would be unclean – defiled with sin.

In the Garden of Paradise, there was nothing wrong with the forbidden fruit of the tree; on the contrary, it was beautiful and delicious. (Gen. 3,6) Man was commanded to abstain from eating this, simply to test his obedience. There was nothing wrong with eating swine in the Old Testament (many other people regularly did so). This, also, was a test of obedience. When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he became unclean or defiled with sin; when the Israelites ate pork they became unclean, not because of the pork, but because of their sin of disobedience.

There is nothing wrong with the consuming of flesh meat for Catholics. The Church allows this on most every day of the week except Friday. The meat is good, eating of meat is good – it is disobedience that is evil. It is true that we must abstain from consuming things that are harmful

– arsenic, herbicides, pesticides, etc. this, however, is not what we are speaking of. The command of God and the Church is to abstain from eating certain things that are good. It is not because the things are evil or bad for us, but simply to keep us in holy obedience.

The sin of Adam appears, to many, to be a truly minor infraction; and God is often accused of “over-reacting” or being “unfair.” Many fall into this way of thinking because they are only considering the physical act and not the spiritual one. Eating a piece of fruit is truly an insignificant thing. However, deliberately disobeying a direct command of God is an act of rebellion and intolerable insubordination. Adam chose to turn away from God, and God is perfectly just in allowing Adam to do this. God owes nothing to mankind. Adam chose darkness rather than light; sin rather than virtue; nothingness rather than All Being. The fall of mankind in Adam is not so much a punishment from God, as it is a free will choice of Adam.

The Israelites became defiled from the eating of pork, not because the pork is bad or evil, but because in eating forbidden foods they chose to rebel against the command of God. In doing so, they turned

away from All Holiness and Purity; and in turning away from Holiness and Purity, they, of necessity, turned toward all evil and defilement. Again, this is not so much a punishment forced upon them, as it is the logical consequence of the choice that has been freely made.

In the New Testament, we have been given the command not to eat flesh meat on Fridays. This is a simple thing and apparently very insignificant in itself; but because it is the command of God, the breaking of this law carries very serious consequences – the Church teaches us that it is a mortal sin. If this mortal sin is not confessed and repented of, it will forever keep us out of Heaven. Again, this is not really a punishment imposed upon us; but is rather, a choice that we have made. In the deliberate breaking of a command of the Church (the Mystical Body of Christ – His Bride), we are deliberately disobeying Christ (and Christ is God). Therefore, it is a direct choice to follow our own wills rather than God’s. In turning away from God’s will, we are turning towards nothingness. The pain of loss, separation, and emptiness is not so much a punishment from God, as it is the logical consequence of our choices. God

is all good and just – He allows us to choose and receive exactly what we have chosen. All those in Hell have made the negative choice to rebel and turn away from God, and God allowed them to freely go to a place where He is not – Hell. God has allowed the damned to have a place without Him, because that is what they want. The goodness of God is thus manifest even in Hell.

God has given the Church the authority to make this law (as well as others), and He has also given Her the authority to dispense with this law when She observes a need for such a dispensation. In times of illness, calamities, or some other serious inconvenience, the Church can, and does give dispensations. The laws of fasting (limiting the quantity of our food) are often dispensed with for those who must perform hard physical labor. The laws of abstinence should seldom be dispensed with – as there is usually something else that we may eat. In the times when there is truly nothing else, healthy people can even skip a meal without any harm to their health – and in this manner, still observe the law of abstinence.

Abstinence should also be considered as penance. It is an opportunity to deny ourselves so

that we may truly follow Jesus Christ. In this mortification, we can show our sorrow for past transgressions, and our current love for God. It is a simple, but very profound, expression of humble submission to God. Every sinner is in need of penance. Today's world appears to be inundated with evil for which penitential reparation must be made. Yet, there are fewer and fewer souls that are willing or even thinking of this. The Modernists have openly suggested that there is no sin, there is no Hell, and so, there is no need for penance or mortification. They have simply concluded that there is no sin in eating meat on Fridays – it is such an insignificant thing that God could not send someone to Hell just for that. Materialists who deny or refuse to consider the soul and spiritual things are easily led astray by such arguments.

We are in need of more and more penance in the world today – not less. As the Modernist Church has done away with abstinence from meat on Fridays (since about 1966); we look at the present and even back in history, and wonder what could have been the dire need of dispensing with this law? What hardship is there – or was there – in abstaining from meat

on Fridays – especially in our modern era of plenty?

There seems to be a direct correlation between the amount of penances that are being performed and the expanse of evil in society. Having turned away from God in disobedience, we have chosen to turn towards the emptiness and void of evil. In this emptiness and void of: God, His grace, His protection, etc., we become susceptible to every evil and every crime. Our society is now in the midst of darkness and readily excuses and accepts every sin and vice. The progression seems obvious, the evil of divorce became acceptable, this was followed by the acceptance of adultery and fornication, then acceptance of murder (abortion), these set the stage for the acceptance of the evils of sodomy (homosexuality). It does not take a genius to see where all this is headed. What comes next will be the acceptance of bestiality and pedophilia.

Of course, the world will try to convince us that this is the way God made things. This is the way God made these people – they can't help themselves. No! This is the way men have made themselves. *They have chosen to turn away from God through sin.*

As they have turned away from God, they have turned to darkness, lies, sins, and perversities. St. Paul made this very clear in his letter to the Romans. The perversions that men succumb to are the logical fruits of their own choices. (Rom 1,24) God has abandoned them to their perverse nature. They perversely desired to be free of God and His laws and influence, and so, He gave them their wish – they begin now their eternal separation from Him. If they would only use their reason for a moment they could see that these things are unnatural and empty – they are fruitless. They have made their choice of lifestyle when they chose to rebel against God. It was not God who made them this way – it is they that have brought this upon themselves.

Our only hope is in penance. A good place for everyone to begin is in observing the law of God from Apostolic Times – to abstain from meat on Fridays. After this, should follow fasting, and alms giving. It is a small thing, but a very important one. It is a means of obtaining God's mercy and grace that may lead us out of the blindness and emptiness of sin, and into the Life, Light, and Glory of God in Heaven.

A Chance to Live

Monsignor John P. Carroll-Abbing

(Continued)

The boys who worked with me were tireless in their forgetfulness of self, serene and enthusiastic. They worked with no personal interest involved, no selfish wish for self-aggrandizement. They were ever the first to rush in, helping the stricken under the rain of death from the sky, seeking lost children. Thousands of cubic feet of caves were made safe through them.

Their sense of humor never failed them even in the most trying circumstances. As we returned from one of our excursions, the cannon suddenly boomed. We sought safety in a sort of trench in the bend of a hill. There we waited for the battle to end. Two of the boys began a discussion ... of all things on men's fashions! One poked fun at another. The cannon boomed louder. I wondered if they could be deaf.

"Boys, where do you think you are? In a cafe? Don't you know what's going on?" I called to them.

They burst out laughing and shot back to realities. The will to do more, the will to do everything, to multiply our efforts, drove us on and on. Each man had to do the work of ten, of a score.

One feat accomplished, a dozen others awaited us. Medical centers were founded, food was distributed, lost children were gathered in, isolated centers were brought back into the living world.

The ambulance was a symbol of life. It came to mean assurance of aid, moral comfort, a sense of not having been forgotten, the certainty of no longer being alone.

News again spread from village to village. A few miles only had separated them, but it might have been thousands.

"Do you mean to tell us there are others living like this?" they asked, unbelieving.

The same broken families, the same equality of misery, each small world a sea of tragedy, each small community suffering the same misfortune but judged as the worst, as the most urgent, when in reality they were all identical from the psychological and material point of view.

There were times when I had to go alone into enemy camps in order to reach my destinations. As I passed, a questioning look lurked in the eyes of the German soldiers.

“What does he think he is doing here?”

It was not difficult to read the meaning of those glances.

Sometimes the Czechs and the Poles dropped into my cave to speak to me. They had been forcibly conscripted into the German Army and now found themselves among men with whom they had little in common. Their traditions, their education, their language were unlike those of the Germans. They looked to me for a word of understanding. They shared with me their thoughts and their worries, they recounted the tales of the tragedy of their lives. I heard of their wives, their children, of their longing to see them.

“No, Father, I don’t want to die... my old woman is still waiting for me. ...”

Now and then the Germans opened their hearts to me.

In the beginning when we had to go through the German lines, we met some opposition. As the days passed, we began to be recognized and our relations improved. Although cold and distant, at least they treated us courteously. From words I heard and actions I witnessed, I saw their own tension growing.

One day I had to call on a local German commander to protest against certain incidents that

had taken place. He was self-controlled and coldly proud. He promised to look into the matter. I made some other remark. Suddenly he stood up and beat his fist on the table before him.

“Seven years, seven whole years! Good God, how long?”

They were beginning to break under the strain of this interminable war.

On the Anzio front thousands died.

In a field kitchen a soldier struck off the names of entire battalions.

At Eastertime some of them crept furtively in a forest of bare blackened trunks, where the luxurious vegetation had all been destroyed. No one was to know they had come in search of the comfort only God could dispense. They received Him humbly in Holy Communion. A few miles distant the roar and the boom and the crash continued.

Rows and rows of bodies awaited burial on those once verdant hills . . . the sound of the spade never stopped . . . and then row upon row of new graves. The shattered broken bodies had found rest.

Pity choked my throat, contracted my heart. I gazed at the dead faces of those eighteen-year-olds and I wondered if among them I might not see some of the boys I had known and joked with in the

Germany of what seemed so long ago, in the peaceful southern Germany I had so much enjoyed.

I stopped near a gravedigger to bless the dead, to say a prayer for them and their loved ones. Sharp words from the digger, dark looks of hate from another. I gave a final blessing and left. ...

I remember that period of my life as a horrible nightmare.

There was little time to think, yet the thought that I was not to come out alive from that inferno of hate and suspicion persisted.

Near one of the small towns lived an old couple. In their tiny hut they relied on the food we brought them to eke out their lonely existence.

One night as I was on my way to them, the dark sky suddenly burst into flame . . . another battle. . . .

I took refuge in a cave. Time passed and the battle went on. My situation was not a happy one. All I could do was wait and hope.

I tried to pray . . . my mind kept wandering. The solitude became oppressive.

I reached my old friends' home at a very late hour. They thanked me for what I had brought. There had been nothing for them to eat that day.

After they had eaten, they asked me to hear their confession.

“Strange, Father,” the woman said to me as I bid good-bye to them, “before this war we had everything we wanted, a vineyard, two cows, vegetables, chickens. We lacked nothing and yet God seemed very far away. The church was near enough, but my husband never went there and I . . . well, you know how it is, Father . . . to tell the truth we had not prayed as we should for years. We weren't bad, but there is so much to be done on a farm. And now God has taken away all we had and He seems so near. It's as if He had done this so we could find Him again. The whole world is full of Him. . . .”

They took me to the door and I left them in their solitude. Solitude? Far from it. That was not solitude. On my return trip I, also, no longer felt alone. The presence of God was very real.

Night often found me and my boys in the most out of the way places. During those five months we slept in tumbledown huts, in cellars, in stables. We knew laughter as well as hardships, as the night when a lonely goat came to nuzzle at our faces and a piglet grunted for hours in its sty, asking for company.

Frequently we spent the night in the Salesian building that only a short time before had been a flourishing Institute.

In agreement with the superior who had been enthusiastic about my plans, I had organized it as a small hospital, a haven for many homeless refugees. It was impossible for the ambulances at our disposal to transport all the sick and wounded to Rome. Here the less dangerously wounded found shelter. The gymnasium was well suited to this purpose. My young helpers had done wonders in a short time in putting everything in good working order.

Three Salesian brothers did the best they could under the direction of a young priest whose face looked even younger than his years. His great sense of humor relieved the tension of the moment, giving us the opportunity of a good laugh and a hearty joke. Possessed with the qualities of real charity, he fulfilled the ideal of the great founder of his order, Saint John Bosco. This was the first time I had come in contact with the Salesians and I realized then to what heights they had raised this idea, in the love they showered on their unfortunate brethren.

Our apartment, if I may call it that, was in one of the cellars of the old Institute. It was murky with smoke, the air foul from the sheep grease of the candles we burned. In the vague light the cellar assumed a Gothic look, aided by the heavy wooden

posts, wedged between the floor and the ceiling to fortify the roof during aerial attacks.

A number of old men shared the place with us. In the rear, separated by a partition, a nucleus of German officers had their quarters. Often during the night they awakened us with songs and the sporadic sound of shots.

Near my bed behind a small curtain I had erected a small altar. We said Mass there in the morning. Whenever I could not sleep, a faint glow told me I was not alone. It came from the tiny vigil light burning before the Blessed Sacrament. I watched with Him. That glow, lost in the darkness of that cellar, grew into a great burning fire, a driving force for the work of the morrow, a sign of faith and hope, love and encouragement.

At eventide, if things permitted it, we gathered together in a small corner. A table and a few chairs filled the whole space. The candlelight deepened the proportions of the room, the corners were lost in gloom.

We chatted, discussed, questions and answers rose spontaneously, we even found cause for a joke or a laugh. Serenity and a feeling of peace refreshed our fagging minds, relaxed our tired muscles. For a few moments at least the horror was forgotten.

The moments seldom lasted. A word hung suspended ... eyes looked into eyes ... we listened. Noise in the distance ... detonations . . . the Germans had begun another attack.

Up we climbed to the terrace to watch the spectacle. Flares streaked the sky. I was reminded of a village feast in honor of the patron saint. Rigid near us, the Germans also stood and kept watch. In each heart a sensation, in each a reaction, under an open sky, helpless.

Below us, scattered in the green hills, hidden in the crumbling ruins, the tired thousands prayed for surcease and one more chance to live, to dream of country, home, family, mutual love and devotion, longing for the lost fireside, the lost caresses of a mother no longer there.

We left the terrace ... a bomb had struck a nearby target ... we had more work to do. ...

The great sufferers were the children. A small tot sat atop the rubble that had been his home, sobbing bitterly. I approached him, talked to him gently, stroked his tangled curls. The sobbing went on. Not a word would he speak.

The road climbed to a curve in the hillside. Alongside of us other houses lay in heaps of broken masonry. The front wall

of one rose stark against the sky. I glimpsed the blue of the sky framed in the skeleton windows. Among the ruins green grass stretched tender blades.

A man passed, walking hurriedly, under his arm a load of wood, broken ammunition boxes. Without a glance at us he went on his way. A woman in black came next, a tub filled with water on her head.

“Whose boy is it?” she asked.

“I do not know,” I answered.

“One more, alone in the world,” and that was all.

Somehow I knew that her words, crude though they sounded, held no real coldness, no lack of compassion.

I took the child in my arms. He told me his name, that his parents lay buried under the rubble.

In the Salesian Institute one of the patients was an orphan of ten who had also lost a dear one in a bombardment. He was rather small for his age. A keen intelligence showed in his blue eyes. Every day he walked to the little street in Genzano where his house had stood. On one of his trips he watched the German workers as they dug in the ruins of a shattered building hoping to salvage a deposit of cigarettes they had been told was there.

Suddenly the boy started to tremble, his face white and tense. Under the strokes of the hammers a large piece of masonry broke and fell apart disclosing a mass of blond curls. Silence for an instant, then the broken sobs of the boy. It was his sister.

A continuous lesson was taught to us during that agonized time of how many barriers a real feeling for the brotherhood of man can surmount. How closely it can knit men of the most diverse opinions, political or other-wise, how social differences can be leveled when danger strikes.

Innumerable souls fought for the betterment of their neighbors. Citizens of high and low degree united, child-less women, made so by the war, gathered homeless little ones wandering hopeless and lost in the street and on the road and mothered them.

Paradoxically perhaps, a sense of deep pity, a Christ-like charity burst forth from the hatred of man for man, from a war, unleashed by the ferocity of opposing factions, by men fighting with the most modern of lethal methods and with the cruelty of savages. The basic goodness in the hearts of men rose to the surface and would not be stilled. The words of the apostle were given heed: "Ye must not love with words alone, but with deeds, with the diffusion of truth."

In the meantime, other devastated regions appealed for aid.

The territories of Frosinone, Cassino, and Terracino were without doubt the worst hit. Since we had done all that could be done for the present in the Castelli region, we betook ourselves to the new areas.

I did not recognize them. The scourge had left only ruin, misery, starvation. Near Cassino, I found the houses, fields and forests leveled to the ground. Not only that. Huge bomb craters riddled it.

The inhabitants of towns and small villages, I was told, had scattered and lived in the new way ... underground. The story of the Castelli repeated itself a dozen, a score of times, with the added danger of a closer contact with enemy fire. The lost children here rose to staggering numbers.

Near Cassino, the main highway runs for many miles beyond Aquino. The vegetation of the hillsides had been luxuriant, rich with vineyards and olive groves in impressive contrast to the craggy rocks uplifted over them.

On that long road, the end of it lost in groves of trees barely discernible to the naked eye, the murky, cloudy morning restless with the thunder of cannon, the hiss of shells traveling over our

heads, told us that Cassino was under heavy bombardment. We dared not be on that road.

Far in the distance two tiny black dots moved toward us. They approached slowly and moment by moment took shape and size.

Nearer and nearer till we made out a small boy and a still smaller girl, hand in hand, blond, delicate of feature, smiling at each other, but their eyes empty and devoid of any expression.

In tatters, eyelids swollen with weeping, caked with dust and dirt from head to foot. We stared at them, our hearts sick with pity. They looked at us unseeing and kept on going. I stopped them and spoke. Not a word, not a sound, only those vacant smiles. I lifted them into my car. Silence still, but they did not resist me.

In Rome, they were given shelter. I went to see them and I found them in the same condition. No one has to this day been able to learn who they are, whence they came, or what was the tragedy in their baby lives.

Hundreds of these children died from hunger and exposure. I recall one case which in stark horror exceeds anything I had seen or heard of. It was told to me by an Allied officer.

The scene was one of the peasant homes built on the slope of a

hill near Terracina. The animals had been taken or killed, the farm implements lay scattered on the ravaged field. Bombs had reduced the house to a shambles. Part of it still stood. The door hung on one hinge.

Sitting on the floor of what had been a bedroom, pieces of plaster and broken furniture all around her, sat a child of eight. On the mattress of the only bed lay three tiny skeletons, bare skin their only covering . . . her little brothers. Over the bed several family photographs. One of them showed a man in the uniform of a corporal of the infantry ... the father who had fought no doubt on some foreign soil, dreams of them spurring him on. The inscription at the bottom of the photograph read: "To my beloved children, from your loving father." The signature was signed in full.

"Where is your mother?" the officer had asked the little girl.

She had not known.

In the silence and the desolation, the wail of a child, the characteristic, tearless sobbing of childhood persisted.

The work in the two areas curtailed my duties at the Hospital of Via Monserrato, although I tried to be there at least two days a week. For a time this hospital continued to care

for wounded soldiers, then it handled civic cases exclusively, but in spite of this it was always filled. The wards were jammed with air-raid victims, some of their wounds were so horrible they do not bear description. I recall mere bundles of breathing flesh, without hearing, sight, speech, or the will to live.

To re-enter the doors of Via Monserrato where the children had been taken was like returning home. The tragedy was not so stark here. Love wandered through its halls, sat at the bedside of a child. The cold hatred of the ravaged countryside, the mud, the anguish in the eyes of the people, faded from my heart.

The sight of the child victims was hard to bear, however. They lay in small wards, four beds to a ward. They neither cried nor complained, the silence was almost unreal. Several, badly burned by the incendiary bombs, had been bandaged from head to toe and looked like human snowballs. I thought of the older invalids who sometimes cried out against fate. Unlike them, these little ones were satisfied to lie quiet in the hospital room, on the white softness of the mattress, under the touch of a tender hand.

In my thoughts I associated them with the hundreds I had met in my wanderings. They revealed a whole new world to me . . . a world filled with young victims.

They had been hurt in their hearts, in their souls, in their belief in a kind world. Would it be possible to prevent this on some future day? Would it be necessary to wage another war that children might be guaranteed eyesight, that young mothers might glory in the unbridled joy of their little ones, as they watched them romping heedlessly through a field in bloom? Would we have to fight and struggle on that hate might not kill, that love might purify, that the natural anxieties of daily existence might not include those of fear and terror?

This could be brought about only in a seeking after God and finding in His Fatherhood the brotherhood of man. This and this alone could bring about the triumph of humility, of meekness, of charity and peace. False ambitions, dreams of expansion and the pride that brings about conflicts could then be banished forever.

In the meantime, war still exists in the world today and we who suffer as we ponder upon its effects, can still pray and work that this may come to be. Our power lies in that.

(To be continued)

Sister Agnes' Favorites



To Saint Teresa of Jesus

“O thou undaunted daughter of desire!
By all thy dower of lights and fires;
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;
By all thy lives and deaths of love;
By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
And by thy thirsts of love, more large than they;
By all thy brim-filled bowls of fierce desires,
By thy last morning’s draught of liquid fire;
By the full kingdom of that final kiss
That seized thy parting soul, and sealed thee His;
By all the Heaven thou hast in Him
(Fair sister of the Seraphim!);
By all of Him we have in thee,
Leave nothing of myself in me.
Let me so read thy life that I
Unto all life of mine may die.”

--Richard Crashaw (1613-1649)



Franciscan Saints

JANUARY 6

THE SERVANT OF GOD
CATHARINE, QUEEN
OF ENGLAND

Widow, Third Order

Catharine was the daughter of King Ferdinand V of Spain and of his spouse Isabella. Reared in piety and in the fear of the Lord, she was espoused as early as the sixteenth year of her age to Arthur, the eldest son of Henry VII of England. Arthur died within five months of their marriage, and Catharine wanted to return to her native country. But King Henry, who had taken a great fancy to her, urgently besought her to remain in England in order to become the wife of his second son, Henry. Since this was also in accordance with her parents' wishes, Catharine consented, and the papal dispensation for the marriage was requested.

Meanwhile King Henry died, and his son ascended the throne as King Henry VIII. Soon afterwards he celebrated his

marriage with Catharine, who was then crowned with great pomp as queen of England. But her heart found as little delight in worldly dignity as that of the pious Queen Esther.

She always arose early in the morning, dressed herself as simply as her rank permitted, and wore the penitential garb of the Third Order of St. Francis which she had joined some time previously. Every morning she attended holy Mass and spent several hours in prayer. Every week she received the holy sacraments, and she fasted so rigorously, that on the vigils of the feasts of our Lady, she partook only of bread and water. Withal, she expended great care on the education of her five children. But King Henry shared not at all in the devout life of his spouse; rather, he gave himself

up to all the gratifications of a luxurious life at court, and even conceived an adulterous affection for a young lady at court, Anne Boleyn by name. This affair was to occasion the greatest sufferings for Catharine. Egged on by godless courtiers, Henry now indulged a dislike for his pious queen. He began to allege that his marriage with Catharine was null and void because the dispensation had not been validly issued. His intention was to marry Anne Boleyn. After a careful investigation of the matter, Pope Clement VII declared the marriage of the king with Catharine valid and insoluble. Now King Henry renounced his allegiance to the Catholic Church and declared himself the head of the Church in England; priests and people that were unwilling to admit his authority were executed or sent into exile.

The pious queen, who in nowise consented to the godless designs of her spouse, was cast off, and Henry married Anne Boleyn. Separated from her children, laughed at by her courtiers, Catharine repaired to a secluded spot, where she sometimes suffered the want of things necessary to sustain her life. Yes, because of the

persecution of the priests she did not even have the comfort of the holy sacraments. Though crushed with grief, Catharine, nevertheless, bore it all with the most perfect conformity to the will of God until her blessed death on January 6, 1536.

ON CONSTANCY IN SUFFERING

1. Consider what a difference there was between the day on which Catharine was crowned amid great splendor as the queen of England, and the day on which, cast off by the king and despised by her courtiers, she left the royal palace helpless and destitute. Yet, that sad day was more truly glorious in the sight of heaven than that first day. On the day of her coronation, the world undoubtedly praised Catharine as blessed; yet, how soon did this blessedness come to a sad end! When, however, she was going into exile, heaven pronounced her blessed: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). This blessedness she still enjoys, and it will never end.

2. Consider how saintly Queen Catharine proved herself

through prolonged constancy in suffering. Not only did she bear patiently the first attacks, when the king turned away from her; she remained constant also when the entire fullness of suffering came upon her along with her rejection. For years she persevered and bore the greatest tribulations without complaint or murmuring even unto her death, always resigned to the holy will of God. Thus she obtained the heavenly crown, according to the words of St. Bernard: “The crown is offered to beginners, but it is given to those who persevere.” But only such constancy and perseverance can ensure for us the eternal crown. Many people bear their sufferings courageously and resignedly in the beginning; but if the sufferings increase, if they last long, they do not persevere, they despair and murmur against the designs of God. Only “he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved” (Matth. 10:22).

3. Consider by what means saintly Queen Catharine preserved that constancy amid such great suffering. In youth she did not allow herself to be dazzled by good fortune and the glamour that surrounded her, but directed her attention to heavenly things rather than to those of

earth. Devout practices and love of mortification confirmed her still more in her life of faith. Even in her suffering she was faithful to her pious practices, and so, with her attention directed more to the future than to the present, she could bear all with joy, while she reflected on the words of the Apostle: “The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). — If you wish to arrive at the glory of good Queen Catharine in eternity, then you must tread the same path, and God’s mercy will also lead you to your goal.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(Tenth Sunday after Pentecost)

O God, who dost chiefly manifest Thy almighty power in long-suffering and in pity, increase Thy mercy towards us, that, hastening after Thy promises, we may be made partakers of heavenly treasures. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

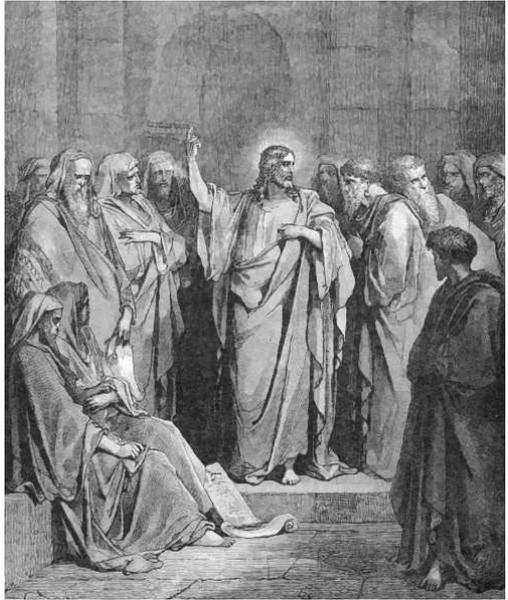
OR,

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 VIII.

ON DEATH.

There is nothing so common, — no event so frequent, — as death. Hardly a day arrives, but we hear some friend, or neighbor, tell us, that “such a one is dangerously ill: such a one has just expired.” Not a day recurs, but we read in our public papers of some sudden, or fatal, accident or other, — that such a one died, after a few hours’ illness; that such a one fell from his horse, and was killed upon the spot; that such a one was drowned; &c. Such as this is the intelligence, and such as these the examples, which we read of, every day. Every day, there comes some messenger or other to proclaim to

our sensibility the frailty of man, and the uncertainty of human life.

I. That we are, indeed, all of us, without any exception, doomed and condemned, to die, — this is a truth, which we, none of us, call in question. From the dawn of creation, and through the course of every age, the fatal decree has been constantly, and everywhere, executed; and will continue to be so till the end of time. It is aimed, alike, at every age, rank, and condition. The infant often dies, the moment almost it had begun to live. The young, and the strong, every day, expire, whilst exulting in the bloom of health, and in the full career of vigor. In its pale, ghastly forms, death equally lurks at the proud portal of the rich,

as it does at the wicket of the humblest cottage. It penetrates, with the same undistinguishing indifference, into the palace of the prince, as it does into the hovel of the beggar. Nor strength, nor wealth, nor crowns, nor scepters, can withstand its power. It spares no one, — seizing, each hour, and every instant, upon some unfortunate victim or other; and stretching upon its bier, without any difference, or distinction, the rich, and the poor; the mighty, and the mean.

Let, therefore, the vigor of our health, and the force of our constitution, be what they may, — although we may be now young, and utterly unacquainted with every kind of ailing, — still, by that same decree, which condemns us to the grave, we, all, carry about with us in our bosoms the principles of decay. Death lives in our blood, and in every part, and particle, of our frame, — even in the very sources of our health, and the foundations of our strength. Insidiously treacherous, it lays snares for us, ten thousand ways. It steals into our veins; and worms itself into our constitution, by innumerable inlets. It, for ever, ruins, and destroys, us by the very means, and instruments, which we make use of to guard against it, — by the food, we eat; the drink, we take; the remedies, we employ,

&c. These are facts, which every day's experience presents to our observation.

II. Admitting, however, that our lives may be preserved, and lengthened, to what is deemed a considerable term, — still, they are extremely short, — composed at best of a few brief hours. We are just born; and die. The space, which separates the two extremes, — the cradle from the coffin, — is so little, — just nothing at all. — But, were it even the case, that God had given us ages to live, — even these, like the flitting of a shadow, or the visions of a dream, would very soon pass away. The fact is, that when time, — even the greatest length of time, — is measured upon the scale of eternity, it is, in reality, nothing. Measured thus, the duration of the cedar of Libanus is not any longer than that of the blade of grass, which grows beneath it. — And thus too, of course, it is with all the flattering, and supposed, advantages of this world. All these, — all the gifts of nature, and of fortune, — pass very rapidly away. Frail, brittle, things, which any trifling accident will overturn, — they fall; and leave not so much as a wreck behind them.

As, then, from the consideration of the shortness of our lives, we should be induced to spend

the little portion of our time industriously, — so also from the reflection upon the uncertainty of the brief tenure, we should learn to be always circumspect, and watchful. The truth is, as we have just observed, and as each day's experience shows us, — death is, for ever, and everywhere, stealing in upon us, unawares. It comes, like the thief in the night, without noise, or notice. Whence, also, it is a melancholy fact, that the far greater portion of those, who die, are taken by surprise. Perhaps, indeed, scarcely does an individual die, (so great a flatterer is nature,) who had not promised himself at least some time, or perhaps years, to come. It is for this reason, therefore, — that is, in order to render us watchful, — that the wisdom of God has so regulated the lapse of time, that we do not sensibly perceive its flight. It cheats our senses; and imposes upon our self-love. Taking away from us a day, it artfully gives us, in return, another. For ever varying, it still always wears the same appearance; so that tomorrow is just like to-day; and even the year elapsed appears to revive again in the year ensuing. Thus it is, that, concealing its own rapidity, time sports with our weakness; and deceives us to our ruin. It is only after a length of years, when the head is silvered, and the cheek is

furrowed, that we become sensible of the delusion; and convinced of our own imprudence.

III. Knowing, then, as we do, both the shortness, and the uncertainty of time, — knowing, that there is not so much as a day, that we can call our own, — not even an hour, that may not consign us to the bed of sickness, — is it not singular, that, with these convictions, we should still continue to live on insensible to our situation, — thoughtless, sinful, dissipated, as if death were at an endless distance from us; — or rather, as if it were never to arrive at all?

On the occasions even, — which are forever recurring, — when we hear of the unexpected illness, or sudden death, of some friend, or acquaintance, — the instructive intelligence, although calculated to awaken our sensibility, and to serve as a warning to us, makes no useful impression whatsoever. We flatter ourselves, that the like accident will not befall us; and that we may continue to rely upon years, and years, to come. The case is, that, when we do thus hear of the death of an acquaintance, we always find out some pretext or other to keep alive our own presumption. “He died,” — we perhaps remark, — “because he was of a delicate constitution, and had long been ailing; or else,

because he took no care of himself; was intemperate; would listen to no advice," &c. Thus, instead of saying to ourselves, as we should do, "My neighbor is dead today, and it may be equally my fate to die tomorrow; — he was snatched suddenly out of life, and it may be, that the same accident may befall me!" — Instead of saying this; we derive not the slenderest benefit from the awful lesson. — It is, indeed, the very general case, that we still think our last hour remote, even when the arrows of death are actually, or even manifestly, pointed at us; — whilst the worm of a mortal illness is rapidly preying upon our constitution. We look far over the grave; and are dreaming of business, and pleasure, long beyond the period, when our souls have received their final, and eternal, doom.

IV. We have seen lately conveyed to the grave, in all the pomp, and circumstance, of funeral vanity, the mortal remains of the once great, and distinguished, N. He was suddenly cut off by a rapid illness, whilst exulting in the enjoyment of everything, that this world ambitions, — riches, rank, honors, &c. Like the far greater part of us, he had looked upon death as a very distant object; and had, therefore, made no preparation for the momentous event. The specter came upon him

unawares; and beckoned him to the grave. His dust is now returned to dust; and his soul is gone to the house of its eternity. He is now alone with his God. — Let us, then, here consider, for a moment, the revolution of thoughts, and the change of feelings, which he, at present, experiences. How bitterly does he now regret his past neglect, and his inattention to "the one thing necessary!" — How feelingly does he bewail his own past imprudence! and how forcibly does he experience the truth of this sentence, — a sentence, which he had often heard, but never heeded, — that *it matters not to have gained the whole world, if the soul is lost!* For what, in reality, does it now matter to him, either what he did, or what he had been, or what he had enjoyed, in this world, if his soul is lost? The only thing, and the sole subject, which now, — and will forever, — occupy his mind, and absorb his feelings, are the judgments of God; his own wretched, and unchangeable, doom; and the endless length of eternity. Such only as these are now his never, never, ceasing thoughts, and sentiments. Let us learn wisdom from the instructive lesson. For we, like him, shall, in the course of a few days, entertain the very same ideas, and experience the same sensations.

V. The circumstance, which, beyond every other, renders death

so alarming, is the fact, that its consequences are irreparable, and everlasting. Death itself is the business of a moment. But, upon this moment how much depends! It decides our lot, forever: for, such as we are at that important crisis, such also shall we be eternally, — eternally miserable, if we expire in the state of mortal sin; — eternally happy, if we depart in the state of grace. “*The tree,*” says the Holy Ghost, “*shall fall.*” If it fall to the right hand, it shall be made to adorn the edifice of the heavenly Jerusalem; — if to the left, it shall be condemned to burn for endless ages. This is a decree, from which there is neither refuge, nor appeal. The sentence once passed, neither sighs, nor tears, nor promises, avail at all. The fate of the soul is fixed; and its misery, or its happiness, will endure throughout the unspeakable length of an unmeasurable eternity.

Wherefore, let us now consider well: and feelingly impressed with a sense of the shortness, and instability, of human life, — death so certain; the time, and manner of it, so uncertain — let us, with all our prudence, endeavor to live always prepared for the great reversion. Let us, frequently reflect, how deep will, ere long, be our regret, that, having once had it in our power to secure to ourselves a happy exit, we foolishly suffered

the favorable season to pass uselessly away. Then we shall hear the fell summons of the dreadful messenger with consternation. We shall feel his cold hand upon us with shuddering, and trepidation. Then not even will the sight of the kind, and compassionate, Jesus afford us any great share of confidence, or comfort: because, having so long abused His mercy, we shall look upon Him, rather as an angry Judge, than a tender Father. Then, full of the distressing conviction, that we have spent our lives amiss, and squandered away the opportunities of grace, — everything will appear to us gloomy, and desponding. — Oh, let the worldling pursue his ambitious projects; let the rich exult in the enjoyment of his riches; let the sinner wanton in the indulgence of his pleasures, — vain triumphs of an hour! — we, enlightened by Christian wisdom, will neither covet their advantages, nor envy their satisfactions. We will, rather, pity their blindness; and weep over their folly.

Aware, then, of the insignificance of all that passes away with time, let us make it, henceforth, the main business of our lives to act up to this great Christian maxim, that “*it matters not to have gained the whole world, if we lose our souls.*”

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