

# THE SERAPH

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St Francis Embracing St. Dominic

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In essentia - Unitas. In dubio - Libertas.  
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# EDITORIAL

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## St. Anthony of Padua

The Roman Catholic Church celebrates the feast of St. Anthony of Padua on June 13.

Most people are familiar with St. Anthony because he has the uncanny power of finding lost objects.

But he is much more than that. Besides his many miracles of astounding quantity and quality, St. Anthony is also known as the “Hammer of Heretics.”

There is no time when the Church was not infested with heresies. The smug attitude of so many Catholics has been punished by God by a withdrawal of His grace. There is always some “window-dressing” of truth in every error. And error, when entrenched in the soul through obstinate pride, a pride that is most destructive to true religion, the intellect no longer seeks that truth so essential to salvation, but becomes the victim of a tyrannically disordered will.

Our days present us with the culmination and collection of all

heresies: Modernism. In the face of this widespread heresy, there are three choices that can be made. The first choice is to compromise the true faith and accept the false doctrines of the heretics. This choice is the easiest because it requires no effort. It is the choice of those who constitute the great apostasy.

On the other end of the spectrum are the Traditionalists. These are equally in error because they refuse to uphold the doctrine and discipline of the Church. They form themselves into larger or smaller groups. They differ from the Modernists whom they waste their time demeaning and mocking, while being even more guilty and odious to God by their Pharisaical pride.

This, too, is a heresy which points up a despicable pride that is so pharisaical in that it wears the external symbols of religion while being far from that internal faith and grace of the true Catholic.

The third choice in the face of all the religious chaos and anarchy is the true and right choice. It is the choice made with the aid of God’s grace. It is the choice of champions. It is

the choice of champions because those who hold fast to all that the Church teaches are devoted especially to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.

These are the true Catholics who cling to their true shepherds and know that being a living member of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ which is the Roman Catholic Church, outside of which there is no salvation, requires both internal and external unity of faith and obedience to that divine authority provided by the invisible God for our safety and salvation.

In speaking of St. Anthony's spirit of obedience, the following is attributed to him: **"...no one can labor efficaciously for the salvation of souls unless they have received a special call from**

**God to that effect. It is from God alone that man should receive his rule of conduct: he should not even desire to labor for the good of others, should such not be the Divine will. To know and to follow that will clearly, a religious has no other means but that of blind obedience to his superiors."**

Of almost all those who claim to be "forever Catholic" it must be asked: "From which visible authority in the Church did they receive the authority to preach in the name of the Roman Catholic Church?"

They have no honest answer. Any fabricated response shows them for what they are: Wolves disguised as sheep. Those who follow them will be torn to spiritual shreds.

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# The Bishop Speaks

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Bishop Louis Vezelis OFM

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## **THE REMNANT ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AGAINST THE DEMONIC DISORIENTATION OF TRADITIONALISTS McKenna the “Theologian”**

Theological errors that blossom into heresy do not happen overnight; nor are they uniquely a matter of the mind as much as an enslaved mind over some matter. The enslavement follows a perverse will and, a perverse will is what St. Augustine would conclude makes a man like a devil.

Of course, the last man to admit to his perverse will is precisely the fellow whose will is perverse.

What appears on the surface as an error in the mind, the result of faulty thinking, is rightly more the work of a misguided function of a man in love with himself more than with either God or his neighbor. The history of all heresies readily supports this view.

We can point to Martin Luther, the Augustinian monk who never really had a vocation to begin with as an

example of the heretic *par excellence*.

It seems that no amount of diatribe and attempted vilification of this man portrayed as a brute of sorts is enough to show his followers, ministers and ministered to, that he was really a rascal right down to the sole of his soul.

Lutheranism has not died out anymore than that ancient curse of humanity known as Manichaeism. St. Augustine was swayed by the apparent truth and “sound” logic of this pernicious error. It would probably surprise more than a few to learn that the Luciferian religion of Freemasonry is the modern day version of Manichaeism. And, not unlike the ancient heresies, the modern ones likewise gestate in the darkness of a mental womb before coming forth under favorable conditions.

Also much like the rest of corrupted nature, heresies are born with the rapidity of bugs mercilessly devouring host plants.

Our present days see so many false teachers and their misguided

disciples. The true Catholic is often at wits end to find the true Church, untainted by fictitious “renewal” jargon, or, floundering in “traditionalist” anarchy.

Many have confused their childhood environment with all the little processions, the cute little girls and handsome little boys dressed so neatly (An admirable sight when joined to solid faith) and think this is the “true” Church.

St. Ignatius Martyr said: **“Where the bishop is, that is where the Church is.”** I’m sure he did not have in mind a Mennonite bishop, or, Bishop Lester Love or any of the many “bishops” with their dazzling, African dancing on TV.

Now, whatever else St. Ignatius had in mind or said, he certainly had in mind to say something about the true Roman Catholic Church and her institutional hierarchy.

“Where the bishop is,” without a doubt refers to a valid Roman Catholic bishop having received the fullness of priesthood directly from the Holy Spirit, as Pope Pius XII clearly stated in his Encyclical Letter “The Mystical Body of Christ” in an effort to establish the correct doctrinal position of the Church in opposition to those who would put

restrictions on the actions of the Holy Spirit. Many other Popes have already established this theological fact to the point that Pope Pius XII was merely continuing the traditional teaching of the Church.

The only ones who would object to this simple truth would be those who seek to limit the workings of the Holy Spirit in order to safeguard their own secret spirit of disobedience.

We have already shown in a previous article the Church’s teaching on the three-fold essential elements for valid and fruitful Sacraments; namely: matter, form and intention (interior). If any one of these is absent, the Sacrament is not valid.

It was also shown that there is serious doubt as to the validity of Sacraments administered by McKenna and all those whom he has attempted to consecrate. And even if some of those Sacraments administered by him and his retinue may be valid, they are certainly devoid of any fruit because of the schismatic posture of the minister. One would consider them as “valid sacrileges.”

Theological errors generally occur due to bad philosophy. For

example, Wojtyla aka “Pope John Paul II” was guilty of false philosophy by shifting the idea of pantheism to “pan-Christianism.” This made his “ecumenism” acceptable to each and every brand of “Christianity.”

The necessity of understanding technical terminology in philosophy and theology cannot be insisted upon enough. Faulty use of accepted words to express ideas can only lead to error and confusion.

Because of this, unscrupulously ambitious individuals, laymen and clergy, cloud the minds of their listeners with fine-sounding and impressive terms that they themselves do not understand. Or worse, while understanding the true meaning of the words they use, they deliberately twist the meanings and “mystify” their listeners.

It is the duty of the bishop to teach. St. Ignatius of Antioch has said: **“Where the bishop is, that is where the Church is.”**

If the reader takes the doctrines and discipline of the Church seriously, if one’s immortal soul and eternal salvation is taken seriously, then it behooves a person to take the time to reflect on the accuracy of words and the ideas that they represent.

For example, if people who speak the English language agree that the word “water” is to mean the substance formed by the combination of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen, then everyone would know what is meant by the word “water”. So, what would be a practical result? Obviously, if a thirsty man asks for a glass of “water” he does not expect to be given a snake. And, if someone wished to have eggs for breakfast, to be served a few rat tails on a paper plate would not be what should have been understood by the word “eggs”.

It is for this reason that the Church, through her teaching authority and the service of dedicated philosophers and theologians has formulated certain specific terms to express expressions of faith correctly. Unless there is a mutual understanding of terminology, there can be little or no understanding of the ideas to be conveyed.

The communication of ideas is often very laborious because of faulty or imprecise words. “More or less” is not enough to suggest precision in thinking and consequent understanding.

The basis for all legal judgments is the mutual understanding of terminology. If two parties are making a contract, it is essential to the contract that both understand the ideas contained in the contract. There can be no meeting of minds if each person has a different understanding of the same word.

If, therefore, we are speaking of the same thing, then we must use words that will clearly express the ideas we wish to express.

This is where knowledge of Logic is essential. True, whenever we think and make judgments on simple matters, we are using logic. If it were not for original sin, we would all be thinking correctly according to the laws and principles of right reason.

But this is not the case. Because of original sin, man's intellect has become darkened and his will weakened. And what is even more tragic is that our once Catholic schools on the college and university level have abandoned the study of philosophy as well as the study of theology according to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

A good starting point for the study and learning of reality as it truly exists around and in us was what we called "perennial philosophy" and

employed the collected works of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Besides St. Thomas, there are the other great lights of the Church such as the Franciscan doctors of philosophy and theology, St. Bonaventure, St. Anthony of Padua, and Blessed John Duns Scotus. These are but a few of the better known great minds in the Church.

However, before we can make judgments, we must first understand where we are coming from. It is not enough to just throw words into the air and hope they will land and constitute something worthwhile and intelligent.

Above all, let us not cower before words we do not fully understand. As students of philosophy and theology we were all ignorant of the meaning of words. But, gradually and through serious reflection, we began to understand things that were once a closed mystery to us.

The time has come when those who truly desire to be correctly informed of what is going on around them in the realm of religion must stop running and rushing from one false teacher to another in search of what they will never find outside the order

established by God: TRUTH and GOODNESS and SALVATION.

Our avowed task here is to analyze the public pronouncements of Fidelis McKenna regarding many things which he has imprudently seen fit to promote as sound doctrine expressive of correct Catholic thinking and believing.

We are forced to do this because this man has imprudently thrust himself upon the religious scene with ideas incompatible with sound philosophy and theology.

Here we will lay the foundation for evaluating a theory that has been thrust upon people as if it were a certainty.

Our position is the Catholic position. It is the position of a sound mind in keeping with the teaching and practice of the Church.

The question is: *Has the Roman Catholic Church been without a true, valid Pope since the death of Pope Pius XII?*

How important is this question? Can the true Church established by Jesus Christ exist without a valid successor of St. Peter, the first Pope? And, what of the other successors of the Apostles, the

bishops? Are they nothing more than agents of a Pope to the point that without a Pope to whom they must submit, they have no powers? Also, if the bishops have no power, then who has divine authority to guide the faithful?

Just because WE have never experienced a time when there was no valid Pope in the Vatican, validly elected and who has accepted his election, does not mean that there has never been a time when the Church was without a Pope.

The history of the Church shows us that there have been a number of antipopes. If we add them all up and include the last four after Pope Pius XII, there will have been forty-five antipopes. This says nothing of the times when there was neither valid pope nor antipope. It makes no difference as to how long the Apostolic See was without a physical pope. When the symbolic “chair of Peter” is empty, it is vacant. It means very simply and plainly that the Church does not have a Vicar of Jesus Christ.

We answer, then, the first question: “Has the Roman Catholic Church been without a valid Pope since the death of Pope Pius XII?” in the affirmative. Yes. Roncali, alias “John XXIII” (Who took the name of the

antipope John XXIII), Paul VI, John-Paul I, John-Paul II and Benedict XVI.

The proof for this conclusion has been provided elsewhere. The fact that these individuals were not and are not popes and the evidence for the fact is called a “postulate.” We do not repeat over and over the evidence and reasons why a judgment has been made based on fact and the laws of the Church.

The same is true for the other questions. It is an historical fact that the Church continued to exist even when the Chair of Peter (Papal Office) was vacant. Therefore, the Catholic Church *can* exist for a greater or lesser period of time without a Pope. But the Church cannot exist without valid bishops. In fact, every time a Pope dies, the papacy is without a Pope. As an illustration, consider the presidency of the United States.

When a President dies (or is impeached), the presidency does not die with him. The office of the president is vacant until a new president is elected. We have a peculiar situation in the United States where the actual legitimacy of the person occupying the position, office, or seat (call it whatever you wish) of president is seriously

questioned. Of all things, Americans might very well be governed by an “antipresident” not differing much from an antipope.

Not many would question the reality of the office of president, while they may have good reason to question the person who is occupying that position.

In like manner, Roman Catholics are faced with a similar problem. Since the death of Pope Pius XII, those who have been perceptively elected to fill the vacancy of the office of Vicar of Jesus Christ may not be valid and legitimate occupants of what is symbolically called the Apostolic See, or, Seat.

As already mentioned, we do not take up this question here because it has been sufficiently treated elsewhere.

Anyone by this time who cannot reach this evident conclusion should be suspected of having a vacancy between the ears...

Our purpose is not to keep repeating the obvious. Our purpose is to protect and defend the Church of her very existence against corrupting influences. For, the correct understanding of this entire papal question leads to many practical

conclusions and consequences. These will be mentioned as we progress in this study.

In one of my visits to Msgr. Guerard des Lauriers, O.P. in France, among other questions pertaining to the situation in the Church, he brought up his “theory” of a “material pope, but not a formal pope” to which I gave complete attention to be sure I heard correctly.

As he proceeded to explain his theory, I could not resolve in my mind the philosophical definitions of “matter” and “form” in relation to his use of the words. As we shall see, there cannot possibly be any such thing as a “material pope” as if it were a real being. It’s like talking of a “paper tiger” which is not a real tiger. Here is where phantasms (imagination) are confused with ideas. It would appear that most heretics and schismatics fall victims not so much to false ideas in the beginning as they become victims of their own imagination. For the moment, we will try to keep the Devil out of all this mess, although he is the principle actor in this comic-tragedy that is destroying true religion.

There is always a great danger of confusing the **phantasm** of the imagination with the **idea** (concept)

of the intellect. This is why I have frequently referred to the erstwhile “theologians-without-portfolio” not as *thinkers* but as *imagineers*.

Some detail regarding phantasms and ideas is necessary and helpful to forge a fitting tool that will keep us from falling down the slippery slope of imagineering as opposed to sound reasoning.

The phantasm is always something concrete and individual. It usually fits only a few things at one time. For example, we have general images of a cat, a rat, a fish, a flower, a house, a monkey, a man, etc. We can make these general images because we keep the more striking and similar features of a class and disregard the characteristics of the individuals that distinguish them.

We cannot, however, make a phantasm or sense-image of all the members of a class, much less of numerous classes taken together.

As an example, our imagination can make a general picture, or phantasm of a lily. But, it cannot make a phantasm that will be applicable to a yellow lily and a red lily at the same time. This is true of anything to which we apply a phantasm. The same is true with the image of a man.

No single image will sufficiently fit a baby, a teenager, an old man, a Pope Pius XII, a Luther or a Calvin. Such examples can be multiplied indefinitely.

The phantasm becomes completely inadequate and impossible when applied to several classes at once. For example, a single phantasm of a “plant” cannot include in it at the same time the squash, the tomato, the grape, the apple, the iris, etc. The reason that this is so is based on the fact that the senses picture single concrete objects and the imagination makes its images or phantasms from these sense pictures. Therefore, the phantasm is also concrete and individual in nature.

Now, the reverse is true of the idea (concept) of the intellect. It is universal and for this very reason it can be applied with equal ease to an individual and to a class and to a number of classes. The example of ‘man’ is the general one used to illustrate this point.

The idea of ‘man’ as a rational animal is truly a good example. We say that ‘man’ is a ‘rational animal.’ By ‘rational’ we mean a being that has the power to think; and, by ‘animal’ we mean a sentient being. So, we designate ‘man’ as a sentient

being with the ability or power to think. This idea will fit anyone having these characteristics from the tiniest human life in a mother’s womb to the oldest person; it will fit the different races equally. It will fit every individual and everyone in this class of ‘man as a sentient reasoning being’.

Here is an interesting difference: A phantasm, being a sensible image, becomes very vague and indistinct with complexity and minuteness of detail. It is possible to form a phantasm of six trees in a row. But to imagine sixty –not fifty-nine or sixty-one – trees in a row will be impossible for most people. And, to imagine six thousand (not more or less) trees in a row is a complete impossibility.

Now, the idea, on the other hand is quite different. The idea of six thousand or six million trees is just as clear to the intellect as five or ten. We have no more difficulty in understanding the number 5,000,000 trees than we would have understanding 4,999,999 or 5,000,001 trees.

In geometry, a ‘line’ is conceived as having length but no width. This means that a ‘line’ has dimension in only one direction. This idea of a ‘line’ is very clear to the intellect.

But the phantasm or sense-image of a line will always be perceived in two dimensions – length and width.

Within this brief description of the difference between sense-images (phantasms) created by the imagination and intellectual ideas, we are beginning to understand and distinguish between those who present their subjective imaginations for ideas and those who are cautious to avoid this pitfall of false reasoning.

To remember: **The phantasm is always the concrete and sensible image of a concrete and sensible object; the idea is the immaterial and suprasensible representation of a thing, even when the thing itself is by nature concrete and sensible. The phantasm is by nature variable, while the idea is by nature constant.**

Since the intellect forms its ideas after considering the phantasm, it follows that phantasm and idea, imagination and intellect, act in close harmony.

It is usual for a phantasm to accompany the idea. Consequently, the idea of ‘man’ will carry along with it the general image of a man. In those cases where it is impossible to make an image of the thing represented by the idea – such as

‘rationality, law, mind, will, certainty, etc.’ – the idea is accompanied by some word that designates it. For instance, when we wish to express the idea of the ‘life principle’ by the letters ‘s-o-u-l.’

Why do we do this? It is due to the fact that the intellect is dependent on the imagination to provide it materials for ideas; and this is also the reason why many people and even philosophers and theologians confuse the idea of the intellect with the phantasm of the imagination. The phantasm and the idea are totally distinct and we must be careful not to confuse them.

The common error of all those who style themselves “traditionalist” is that they confuse the specters of their imagination with objective reality as it is conceived by the mind.

We return now to the theory of Msgr. Guerard des Lauriers, OP.

Basically, what Bishop Guerard des Laurier, OP has sought to do is somehow maintain the illusion that there is a “pope” despite the fact that he, des Lauriers, KNOWS that his “pope” is not a true pope because of manifest heresies.

Yet, des Lauriers is unable to face this reality and seeks to fabricate an

exit from his unpleasant duty as a thinking theologian to face the simple truth: **The great apostasy has come down to us from the Vatican itself.** It's a little like the picture of the man who painted himself in a corner. What did he do? Simple. He painted a door and walked out. And that is what Guerard des Lauriers attempted to do.

No sincere, loyal and devoted Catholic would wish to accept this for reality. It takes, oddly enough, not only courage but also faith. The kind of 'faith' required is more by way of trusting our senses and minds that what has been presented before us by those perceived to be an authority in the Church after Pope Pius XII are without doubt **deniers of infallible Catholic doctrine.**

I would wish to see Msgr. Guerard des Lauriers, in this light. Yet, right reason and love for truth and the defense of the Church against the mind-wrenching contradictions inherent in his theory, require that the scalpel of sound doctrine and thinking be applied.

We will begin examining this "theory" of a "material pope but not a formal pope" in the light of Catholic philosophy as espoused by all the great doctors of the Church

and especially by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Since it is essential to define our terms, we will begin by explaining what we understand by "matter" and "form".

First, a little background of where these terms came from: The Church always had them in mind from the very beginning even before these ideas were given flesh, so to speak.

Very often the Patriarchs and Doctors of the Church, whom we know as the 'Fathers of the Church' (Not to be confused with the modern priest-charlatans who call themselves "the Fathers") used words that expressed the same truths as those terms that were hammered out laboriously to define Catholic doctrine.

The terms "matter" and "form" come to us from the time of the Greek philosopher, Aristotle. They come from the theory which explains the constitution of 'natural bodies' by means of the **dualistic composition of matter and form.** It was Aristotle who devised this theory and it was later adopted and developed by the scholastics of medieval and modern times.

The fundamental doctrine of this theory is that all natural bodies are composed of two incomplete substantial principles; one is the general principle common to all natural bodies, indeterminate but determinable, called *matter*, while the other is the specifying principle distinctive of each type of natural body, actualizing and determining the matter, called the *form*. The union of both principles gives rise to the ‘natural body’ as a *unitary composite substance*.

There is no doubt that many of the ancient and medieval ideas regarding chemistry, physics and astronomy understandably contained errors in opinions of those days. Nevertheless, those whom we call “Neo-scholastics” have discarded those antiquated ideas in the light of scientific finds of modern times. This should not be taken to mean that everything of the past has been thrown away. There is nothing in modern science that contradicts the basic tenets of this theory which is called *hylomorphic* –from the Greek ὑλη - matter and μορφή - form. And from this we get the word “hylomorphic” – meaning, of course, “matter” and “form”. These words are too often used incorrectly and lead to much confusion.

This is the reason why the study of logic which is the science of correct thinking is so necessary particularly in our day when it is so spiritually risky to blindly believe whoever comes down the pike wearing a Roman collar or a monks’ cowl.

To the question posed to me: “How do we know that YOU are right?” I simply answer: “If ever you hear me teach a different doctrine other than what the Roman Catholic Church believes and teaches, run as fast as you can.”

The problem, however, is that most people do not know what they believe anymore and whatever scraps of religion they still vaguely remember, they remember amiss.

This is why I urge the kind reader (and even the reader who looks for faults in order to accuse) to take the time to read and study what has been conscientiously and sincerely prepared for your education and understanding of the true faith.

If, as any honest student of theology would say after four solid years’ of study: “We have barely scraped the surface,” how much more so those who have never gone beyond their childhood catechism?

(To be continued)

Sermons and Addresses  
OF  
HIS EMINENCE  
WILLIAM CARDINAL  
O'CONNELL  
ARCHBISHOP OF BOSTON



THE EARLY CHURCH  
A SERIES OF FIVE  
CONFERENCES

DELIVERED AT THE  
CATHOLIC SUMMER  
SCHOOL,

PLATTSBURGH, N. Y., 1895.

THE PERSECUTIONS, THE  
STORM

*(Continued)*

It was at the suggestion of this same Pliny that Trajan reduced his measures to a better regulated mode of proceeding. He forbade the detecting and spying out of the Christians, but made a regular legal

procedure necessary, so that for a while the command of the Emperor had the effect of suppressing the too active inquisition of the pagans. Nevertheless, he did not withdraw any of the laws enacted against them, but left them in full force; so that a Christian once accused and refusing to abjure the faith, was immediately punished; for the words of his rescript read: "Si deferantur et arguantur puniendi sunt." Eusebius commenting upon this strong decree says, that though it dampened for awhile the too ardent zeal of their persecutors, nevertheless the jealousies and hatred of the pagan people continued a sufficient excuse for denunciation and consequent punishment of the Christians. The duration of this persecution was from the year 107 to the year 117, making thus a period of ten bitter years of trial for the Church.

Emperor succeeded Emperor, and all, with the exception of Alexander Severus, who preserved the statue of Christ among his household gods, and Philip the Arab, who was considered to be a Christian himself, repeated over and over again the same story of hostilities. Besides the three persecutions we have already named, passing over the times, when owing to private broils and foreign wars our forefathers were left for a

time unmolested, we may with St. Augustine enumerate seven others, commonly called, on account of their ferocity and extent, general persecutions. These were the fourth under Marcus Aurelius, who reigned from 161 to 180; the fifth under Septimius Severus (193-211); the sixth, under Maximian the Thracian (235-238); the seventh, under Decius (249-251); the eighth, under Valerian (253-260); the ninth, under Aurelian (270-275); the tenth, under Diocletian (284-305).

Of these, we shall only consider the two most important on account of their duration and bitterness, namely that of Marcus Aurelius, at the end of the second century, and Diocletian at the end of the third century. This M. Aurelius, though a stoic philosopher, considered the Christians as stubborn and enemies of the state. Melitus, bishop of Sardis, in his apology which he presented to Marcus Aurelius, did not fear to state openly that the sufferings, which his people were compelled to endure under his very eyes, were monstrous and barbarous in the extreme; that informers excited by the new decrees promulgated throughout Asia ceased not day and night to insult his people and despoil them of their goods. Eusebius, moreover,

informs us that this tyrant gave orders to the prefect of Gaul to put to death every Christian who remained constant in the profession of his faith. Athanagorus besought him to show a little sympathy for these suffering people, and not to allow them to be treated like mere cattle, but the appeal was without avail.

What the apologists and bishops sought from the Emperor in vain was finally brought about by the interposition of Providence itself. The prayers of his subjects he heeded not, but he was compelled to a temporary relaxation of his cruelties by a most wonderful miracle. When the Emperor was forming his troops, writes Eusebius, in order of battle against the Germans and Sarmatians, he was reduced to extremities by a failure of water. It was in the heat of summer and the soldiers were dying of thirst. The enemy was before them ready to commence the attack, but the fainting army had no strength to lift their arms against them. The Emperor was dismayed and saw sure defeat staring him in the face. At this awful juncture, the very Christians whom he had so terribly persecuted came to his assistance. The legion called Melitine, composed of Christian soldiers,

knelt down upon the ground, and, to the surprise of the Emperor and the army, besought God to show His power. Wonder followed surprise, and fear followed upon wonder; for, behold, a fierce storm suddenly arose in a clear sky. The lightning gleamed above the enemy, and terrible thunder bolts, leaping from the clouds, carried death and destruction into their ranks and they fled in terror, while upon the army of the Romans a gentle rain descended, and the perishing soldiers, catching the grateful drops in their helmets, were soon refreshed and saved from a terrible overthrow. This legion was ever afterwards known as the Thundering Legion.

Tertullian tells us that in a formal document, the Emperor acknowledged this miracle as obtained by the prayers of the Christians, and Eusebius narrates that in consequence of this favor, Aurelius issued an edict by which those accused of Christianity should be pardoned, and their informers should undergo the penalty instead. A memorial of this wonderful event is sculptured on the celebrated Antonine column at Rome where is represented a figure of Jupiter Pluvius scattering lightning and rain upon the enemy, and their horses

lying prostrate, while the Romans, sword in hand, are rushing upon them. This event took place in the year 174.

It is wonderful how soon even so marvelous an interposition of God may be forgotten. Three years after, the Emperor seemed to have remembered nothing of it, and from that time until the end of his reign there was no cessation of constant persecution. Among the most illustrious martyrs put to death during his reign, were Ptolemy, Lucius, Justin the Apologist, St. Cecilia, Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and Bothinus, bishop of Lyons.

Higher and higher rose the awful tide of hatred to the Church of Christ, until the Christians began to believe that the days of Antichrist had come at last. Hundreds upon hundreds were dragged from the quiet of home, from their hiding places, from their occupations in the open day and the silence of the night, hurried before tribunals, accused by slanderous witnesses, then condemned to dark prisons and loathsome cells to wait for that release which came only through the gate of death.

We come, finally, to view briefly the last and most terrible of all the storms

that raged against the Church of God. Under the Emperors Gallienus and Aurelian and their three immediate successors, the Church enjoyed a long season of respite, so that when Diocletian came to the throne, the Christians were no longer considered enemies of the state, and were allowed to practice their worship openly and with perfect freedom. Many of them had attained to the highest and most influential positions in the empire. Under these new conditions, the Church increased and flourished with marvelous prosperity. Magnificent churches were erected rivaling in splendor of architecture the very temples of the Pagans. All day long, great throngs passed in and out under their beautiful portals, and on Sundays and feast days, large as they were, they were not capacious enough to hold the enormous concourse of the faithful that crowded to participate in the sacred solemnities. As many of their number were exceedingly rich and prosperous, the society of the faithful grew more and more wealthy, and though as yet, the Pagan religion still flourished, in reality it might be said that Christianity drew the greatest number to its following. The religion of Christ was everywhere respected, and the Christian rites were celebrated with sumptuous

magnificence. Bishops were exceedingly beloved on all sides, and an enormous number of the noblest and gentlest blood now professed the faith of Christ. God's blessing was visibly upon His Church: He had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies and showered prosperity upon them.

One would surely imagine that after all the terrible tortures and trials which they and their ancestors had undergone for the faith that, now, they would remember what it had cost them, and prove grateful for the peace which they at last enjoyed. But according to Eusebius, God's blessings were soon forgotten, and instead of growing more strong and loyal in the faith, they gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the good things of life and became lukewarm in the matters of religion. The same men who in adversity were signalized by virtue and courage in the Church's defense, became in prosperity sluggards and cowards. They began to envy one another, to sow discord among themselves, and thus break the bonds of Christian peace. Then the chastisements of God were poured forth.

In the beginning of his reign, Diocletian was far from unfavorable

to the Christians. Frequently urged to oppose their increasing force and influence, each time he refused, until finally at the urgent solicitation of Galerius he yielded, and seeing dissension among their own ranks, he determined upon their extermination, to establish the state upon a firmer basis and endow it with additional splendor.

The immediate cause which led Diocletian to enter upon a cruel policy is handed down by Lactantius (chap. 10), *De Mortibus Persecutorum*. The Emperor, anxious to know what events the future held in store for him, and to learn what secret evils threatened the empire, gathered around him his pagan priests. According to the usual custom, they set about to consult the omens in the palpitating entrails of birds. It seems that some Christians, probably officers of the palace, were present at this scene. One of them made the sign of the cross and the Pagan priests confessed themselves unable to give an answer to the Emperor's curiosity. Immediately a discussion arose as to why there was no response to the omen. It was soon revealed that the Christians by some sign had cast a spell upon the operations, and at once, the Emperor, roused to an awful fury,

gave orders that the edicts against the faithful should be executed.

In the nineteenth year of the reign of Diocletian, on the feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, Easter Day, the occasion of happiest spiritual joy, the edicts of persecution were promulgated. It was decreed that all the churches of the Christians should be leveled to the ground, the sacred books delivered to the flames, the noble personages who professed the Christian faith disgraced publicly, and the people who dared to assemble for Christian worship to be deprived of liberty. As if this did not suffice, later on new edicts were decreed, by which the bishops and prefects of the churches were to be cast into prison, and by every torment constrained to offer sacrifice to the gods. Imagine the fear that now filled Christian communities in all parts of the world! "From the East to the West," writes Lactantius, "could be heard the savage roars of the wild beasts that ruled the empire, and had I a hundred tongues speaking a hundred languages, with a voice strong as steel, I could not begin to relate the cruelties which were enacted and the punishments with which we were afflicted."

The first to be seized and put to

death were those who held positions in the imperial palace: after them the bishops, priests, and sacred ministers were dragged to execution. No proof or pretext of public fault or civil crime was thought necessary; even the appearance of the customary forms of justice was omitted. Men of every age and condition, after being first delivered to the mob and by them beaten almost to insensibility, were then taken by the executioners and thrown into the flames. The servants and domestics, and all of humble station, were bound hand and foot, weighted with stones about the neck, and thrown into the sea. The prisons groaned with their Christian occupants, and so full were they of these confessors of the faith that there was no room left for the common criminals. Diocletian himself often took delight in being present in person at the martyrdom of these poor victims in the public places. The only ones to whom he showed any mercy were the apostates. The magistrates seemed to vie with one another in gaining the greatest number of these from among the body of the Christians. Knowing the pleasure it gave to the Emperor to succeed in this work, they took every possible means to swell the number of apostates which they recorded and sent to

Diocletian. Unfortunately there were not lacking some, who yielding to the awful terrors before them sacrificed to the gods. But often, the magistrates enrolled many upon their books as perverts, who were in reality faithful. For example, some constant for their professions to the true faith were thrown into the flames and when half dead again rescued by the inquisitors. On being asked whether they would offer incense to the gods, being unconscious and unable to speak, their silence was taken as an indication of consent; and so many, through this deceit, were proclaimed to have given up the faith.

It may be wondered how we know so fully the description of the legal inquiries, the questions asked and the answers given by the Christians during the process of examination and martyrdom, as described in the Acts of the Martyrs. The fact is that from the very earliest period, provision was made for the emergency. St. Clement, the Roman Pontiff, appointed seven notaries, who were shorthand reporters, to take down all the particulars they could learn of the actions and words of the martyrs in the district separately confided to each of them.

The legal trials of the martyrs, which in the provinces usually took place in the Proconsul's palace, called the Pretorium, were carried on inside of a railing and behind a curtain. Of course only the pagan notaries could there be present and take note of the questions of the magistrates and the answers of the Christians. Sometimes, by bribery, copies of these official reports were obtained from the pagan notaries. The Christian notaries used to mingle in the crowd outside the Pretorium to jot down privately everything that happened during the time of the process. These notes were afterwards copied in regular form, and were read in the churches and sent to Christians in distant countries. Ruinart shows that it was customary in many churches, especially in Africa, Gaul, and Spain, to read these Acts of the Martyrs in public on the anniversary of their death.

Eusebius describes vividly the awful character of the punishments meted out by the Emperor. Some were roasted on gridirons, others were devoured piecemeal by leopards, or gored by wild bulls set loose upon them in the arena. Throughout Africa, Mauritania, Egypt and Thebiades the number of martyrs was simply incalculable. It is stated,

upon excellent authority, that during the very first month of this persecution from fifteen thousand to seventeen thousand were put to death.

Among the distinguished soldiers of Christ who sealed their faith with their life blood, we find mentioned Dorotheus and Gorgon, two of the Emperor's most trusted chamberlains. Sebastian, a captain of the imperial guards, was shot to death with arrows, and Thynius, bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded; St. Pancratius, martyred at Rome; St. Januarius, at Beneventum; SS. Cosmas and Damian, in Cilicia; St. Agnes, a Roman maiden; St. Theodora, at Antioch, and SS. Justina and Rufina, at Seville.

So confident was the Emperor of utterly blotting out the name of Christian that he erected pillars upon which his apparent victory was described as the "victory of paganism," the "extinction of Christianity," the "extirpation of superstition." This cruel war waged even after the resignation of Diocletian, losing none of its fury under Galerius and Maximin, who succeeded him. And not until the year 312, when Constantine the Great entered Rome under the

gleaming banner of the Cross, was the hand of the oppressor uplifted and the Church restored to peace. Thus the bloody struggle of three centuries was ended, and Christianity at length gained a complete triumph over paganism.

We have now to consider the value set upon Martyrdom by the Christians themselves, and what might be called its intrinsic value, and the value which it bears as a confirmative evidence of a historical truth or fact. First, nothing can be surer than that they who suffered confiscation and imprisonment and banishment, but especially death, were honored with the highest veneration, and besought as protectors and intercessors, whose influence was all-powerful with God. Evidence of this we have yet in the Catacombs, where it is plain, as we shall see from inscriptions still legible, that it was considered the greatest privilege to be buried near a martyr's tomb. Moreover from the earliest times, the Holy Sacrifice was offered up over the ashes of the martyrs.

As to the merely human value of an attestation sealed by death to confirm an historical fact, there can be no greater proof of sincerity and fidelity; and hence it is that no

stronger argument of the truths and facts of Christianity exists than the testimonies of the martyrs themselves. For whether we consider the number, their personal qualities, or the fortitude they displayed, it is equally evident that what they asserted really happened.

One does not die to maintain a doubtful proposition. Many of the early martyrs were eye witnesses of the works of Christ; others saw with their own eyes the miracles of the Apostles, and still others were convinced by the testimony of those in whom they must have had most perfect confidence. Then consider that in defense of this they were ready to forfeit everything they possessed, even life itself. It is vainly urged by mockers of religion that they were fanatics, but the whole story of the facts in the case, and the only one which history has handed down to us, gives the lie to this calumny. Their conduct was the very contrary of fanatical. They were quiet, peaceful, retiring men and women, who desired only to escape publicity. What human motive could have urged them to give up their lives? Was it vanity? Thousands of them were children, slaves, and men and women of the lowest rank, who died without leaving the record of their names; and so common was martyrdom in

those days, that death for the faith seemed an everyday matter and received little notice.

There is only one motive that the impartial study of the case can reveal. They were certain of what they professed, and for that certainty they died. That certainty is Christ Crucified and Risen from the dead.

The story, therefore, of the first three ages of the Church, written in the blood of thousands of witnesses to the truth of Christianity, is the strongest possible testimony to the divine origin of the Faith, which our ancestors have handed down to us. And, surely, the fact that notwithstanding the opposition of every human power and dignity, the Church continued to grow and increase in fervor, strength, and numbers, is sufficient evidence of its divine origin. What human institution during three hundred years could defy the greatest civil power the world has ever known, the Imperial Caesars, and not only survive, but succeed to a greater and more universal power than the Caesars themselves had ever known, in the very city of the Caesars, Rome itself? What greater argument can be adduced to prove the divine mission of the Church and the constant protection of Christ, her

Founder, than the story of the sufferings of the followers of Christ in the first three centuries? If the Church could ever fail, here was the time for her complete extinction. If kings, or emperors, or consuls, or prefects, or magistrates had ever power to crush the Christian faith, here surely was the time it would have been blotted out. If edicts, laws and proclamations were ever to impede the progress of the Church's triumph, here was the time to place an immovable barrier against her march. If sufferings, tortures, inhuman cruelties or death itself were of any avail against the Spirit of God, revealed in the doctrines of the Church, surely after three hundred years of all that fiendish ingenuity could devise, were Christianity not divine, it would then have perished in oblivion. But, on the contrary, we know that it came forth from the fiery ordeal glorious and triumphant, purified by the trial, strengthened by its combat with enemies. The story of the infant Church may well serve as a solace to Catholics in times of trouble, and a warning to our enemies. God's word is Truth, and His promises endure forever.

“Behold,” said Christ, “I am with you always, until the consummation of the world.”

And so I draw to a conclusion this conference. We have accompanied the early Christians through their period of grief to that of rejoicing, from the time of Nero, through the reign of persecution to the beginning of the days of peace.



**THE MAKING OF A GOOD WILL OR TRUST:  
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**See you in September.**

**May God bless you.  
THE SERPAH**

# Could You Explain Catholic Practices?

Rev. Charles J Mullaly, S.J.

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## CHURCHBELLS

As my business friend and I stood at the church door waiting for the rain to stop, the church bell began to ring. Turning to me, he said:

“The ringing of that bell, Father, recalls an amusing incident that occurred to one of your principal parishioners, a neighbor of mine. It was Holy Thursday evening and he was standing at an Italian fruit vender’s stand, down near the station. Our good Catholic neighbor heard a church bell ring and turning to Tony he said:

‘St. John’s bell sounds clear to-night.’

‘That is not St. John’s bell,’ replied Tony. ‘Don’t you know that Catholics don’t ring the church bell after Mass on Holy Thursday until Mass on Holy Saturday?’

“My neighbor could not understand how that Italian boy knew more about Church customs than he did, until I told him that in the small towns of Italy the church bell plays an important part in the daily life of the people. It is the Angelus bell that tells them it is time to work. Again, it is the Angelus at noon and in the evening, and the De Profundis at night that tell the passing hours.”

“Yes,” I replied, “in those small Catholic towns in Europe, the church bell is loved for its close association with the family life of the people. It rings the glad tidings

of their wedding day. It calls them to accompany the Blessed Sacrament to the sick when they hear it sound five strokes, pause, and then sound one. The sad, tolling bell tells that the weary soul has gone to rest. No wonder that they flock for miles when there is a new bell and the Bishop comes to bless it.”

“I have never seen a bell blessed,” remarked my practical business friend.

“The ceremony is impressive,” I went on. “The bell, placed at the head of the aisle and raised from the floor, is washed inside and out with water mixed with salt. It is then dried with towels. Several psalms are recited, followed by beautiful prayers, begging God to bless the Faithful, whenever it rings. The outside of the bell is anointed in seven places with the holy oil used for the anointing of the sick, while the inside is anointed in four places with holy chrism. In making the unctions and in naming the bell after one of God’s saints, the Bishop says:

“May this bell be hallowed, O Lord, and consecrated in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. In honor of St. (N). Peace be to thee.”

“Afterwards the thurible with lighted incense and myrrh are placed under the bell and the ceremony concludes with the singing of the Gospel telling of the visit of our Lord to Martha and Mary.”

# The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena

Translated by Algar Thorold

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## A TREATISE OF PRAYER

(Continued)

*How they, who are arrived at the aforesaid unitive state, have the eye of their intellect illuminated by supernatural light infused by grace. And how it is better to go for counsel for the salvation of the soul, to a humble and holy conscience than to a proud lettered man.*

“With this light that is given to the eye of the intellect, Thomas Aquinas saw Me, wherefore he acquired the light of much science; also Augustine, Jerome, and the doctors, and my saints. They were illuminated by My Truth to know and understand My Truth in darkness. By My Truth I mean the Holy Scripture, which seemed dark because it was not understood; not through any defect of the Scriptures, but of them who heard them, and did not understand them. Wherefore I sent this light to illuminate the blind and coarse understanding, uplifting the eye of the intellect to know the Truth. And I, Fire, Acceptor of sacrifices, ravishing away from them their darkness, give the light; not a natural light, but a supernatural, so that, though in darkness, they know the Truth. Wherefore that, which at first

appeared to be dark, now appears with the most perfect light, to the gross or subtle mind; and everyone receives according as he is capable or disposed to know Me, for I do not despise dispositions. So you see that the eye of the intellect has received supernatural light, infused by grace, by which the doctors and saints knew light in darkness, and of darkness made light. The intellect was, before the Scriptures were formed, wherefore, from the intellect came science, because in seeing they discerned. It was thus that the holy prophets and fathers understood, who prophesied of the coming and death of My Son, and the Apostles, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, which gave them that supernatural light. The evangelists, doctors, professors, virgins, and martyrs were all likewise illuminated by the aforesaid perfect light. And everyone has had the illumination of this light according as he needed it for his salvation or that of others, or for the exposition of the Scriptures. The doctors of the holy science had it, expounding the doctrine of My Truth, the preaching of the Apostles, and the Gospels of the Evangelists. The martyrs had it, declaring in their blood the Most Holy Faith, the fruit and the treasure of the Blood of the

Lamb. The virgins had it in the affection of charity and purity. To the obedient ones is declared, by it, the obedience of the Word, showing them the perfection of obedience, which shines in my Truth, who for the obedience that I imposed upon Him, ran to the opprobrious death of the Cross. This light is to be seen in the Old and New Testament; in the Old, by it, were seen by the eye of the intellect, and known the prophecies of the holy prophets. In the New Testament of the evangelical life, how is the Gospel declared to the faithful? By this same light. And because the New Testament proceeded from the same light, the new law did not break the old law; rather are the two laws bound together, the imperfection of the old law, founded in fear alone, being taken from it, by the coming of the Word of My only-begotten Son, with the law of Love, completing the old law by giving it love, and replacing the fear of penalty by holy fear. And, therefore, said My Truth to the disciples, to show that He was not a breaker of laws: 'I came not to dissolve the law, but to fulfill it.' It is almost as if My Truth would say to them — The Law is now imperfect, but with My Blood I will make it perfect, and I will fill it up with what it lacks, taking away the fear of penalty, and founding it in love and holy fear. How was this declared to be the Truth? By this same supernatural light, which was and is given by grace to all, who will

receive it? Every light that comes from Holy Scripture comes and came from this supernatural light. Ignorant and proud men of science were blind notwithstanding this light, because their pride and the cloud of self-love had covered up and put out the light. Wherefore they understood the Holy Scripture rather literally than with understanding, and taste only the letter of it, still desiring many other books; and they get not to the marrow of it, because they have deprived themselves of the light, with which is found and expounded the Scripture; and they are annoyed and murmur, because they find much in it that appears to them gross and idiotic. And, nevertheless, they appear to be much illuminated in their knowledge of Scripture, as if they had studied it for long; and this is not remarkable, because they have of course the natural light from whence proceeds science. But because they have lost the supernatural light, infused by grace, they neither see nor know My Goodness, nor the grace of My servants. Wherefore, I say to you, that it is much better to go for counsel for the salvation of the soul, to a holy and upright conscience, than to a proud lettered man, learned in much science, because such a one can only offer what he has himself, and, because of his darkness, it may appear to you, that, from what he says, the Scriptures offer darkness. The contrary will you find with My servants, because they offer the light

that is in them, with hunger and desire for the soul's salvation. This I have told you, my sweetest daughter, that you might know the perfection of this unitive state, when the eye of the intellect is ravished by the fire of My charity, in which charity it receives the supernatural light. With this light the souls in the unitive state love Me, because love follows the intellect, and the more it knows the more can it love. Thus the one feeds the other, and, with this light, they both arrive at the Eternal Vision of Me, where they see and taste Me, in Truth, the soul being separated from the body, as I told you when I spoke to you of the blissfulness that the soul received in Me. This state is most excellent, when the soul, being yet in the mortal body, tastes bliss with the immortals, and oftentimes she arrives at so great a union that she scarcely knows whether she be in the body or out of it; and tastes the earnest-money of Eternal Life, both because she is united with Me, and because her will is dead in Christ, by which death her union was made with Me, and in no other way could she perfectly have done so. Therefore do they taste life eternal, deprived of the hell of their own will, which gives to man the earnest-money of damnation, if he yield to it."

*How this devout soul seeks knowledge from God concerning the state and fruit of tears.*

Then this soul, yearning with very great desire, and rising as one intoxicated both by the union which she had had with God, and by what she had heard and tasted of the Supreme and Sweet Truth, yearned with grief over the ignorance of creatures, in that they did not know their Benefactor, or the affection of the love of God. And nevertheless she had joy from the hope of the promise that the Truth of God had made to her, teaching her the way she was to direct her will (and the other servants of God as well as herself) in order that He should do mercy to the world. And, lifting up the eye of her intellect upon the sweet Truth, to whom she remained united, wishing to know somewhat of the aforesaid states of the soul of which God had spoken to her, and seeing that the soul passes through these states with tears, she wished to learn from the Truth concerning the different kinds of tears, and how they came to be, and whence they proceeded, and the fruit that resulted from weeping. Wishing then to know this from the Sweet, Supreme and First Truth, as to the manner of being and reason of the aforesaid tears, and inasmuch as the truth cannot be learnt from any other than from the Truth Himself, and nothing can be learnt in the Truth but what is seen by the eye of the intellect, she made her request of the Truth. For it is necessary for him who is lifted with desire to learn the Truth with the light of faith.

Wherefore, knowing that she had not forgotten the teaching which the Truth, that is, God, had given her, that in no other way could she learn about the different states and fruits of tears, she rose out of herself, exceeding every limit of her nature with the greatness of her desire. And, with the light of a lively faith, she opened the eye of her intellect upon the Eternal Truth, in whom she saw and knew the Truth, in the matter of her request, for God Himself manifested it to her, and condescending in His benignity to her burning desire, fulfilled her petition.

*How there are five kinds of tears.*

Then said the Supreme and Sweet Truth of God, “Oh, beloved and dearest daughter, you beg knowledge of the reasons and fruits of tears, and I have not despised your desire; open well the eye of your intellect and I will show you, among the aforesaid states of the soul, of which I have told you, concerning the imperfect tears caused by fear; but first rather of the tears of wicked men of the world. These are the tears of damnation. The former are those of fear, and belong to men who abandon sin from fear of punishment, and weep for fear. The third are the tears of those who, having abandoned sin, are beginning to serve and taste Me, and weep for very sweetness; but since their love is imperfect, so also is their weeping,

as I have told you. The fourth are the tears of those who have arrived at the perfect love of their neighbor, loving Me without any regard whatsoever for themselves. These weep and their weeping is perfect. The fifth are joined to the fourth and are tears of sweetness let fall with great peace, as I will explain to you. I will tell you also of the tears of fire, without bodily tears of the eyes, which satisfy those who often would desire to weep and cannot. And I wish you to know that all these various graces may exist in one soul, who, rising from fear and imperfect love, reaches perfect love in the unitive state. Now I will begin to tell you of these tears in the following way.”

*Of the difference of these tears, arising from the explanation of the aforesaid state of the soul.*

“I wish you to know that every tear proceeds from the heart, for there is no member of the body that will satisfy the heart so much as the eye. If the heart is in pain the eye manifests it. And if the pain be sensual the eye drops hearty tears which engender death, because proceeding from the heart, they are caused by a disordinate love distinct from the love of Me; for such love, being disordinate and an offense to Me, receives the meed of mortal pain and tears. It is true that their guilt and grief are more or less heavy, according to the measure of their

disordinate love. And these form that first class, who have the tears of death, of whom I have spoken to you, and will speak again. Now, begin to consider the tears which give the commencement of life, the tears, that is, of those who, knowing their guilt, set to weeping for fear of the penalty they have incurred.

“These are both hearty and sensual tears, because the soul, not having yet arrived at perfect hatred of its guilt on account of the offense thereby done to Me, abandons it with a hearty grief for the penalty which follows the sin committed, while the eye weeps in order to satisfy the grief of the heart.

“But the soul, exercising herself in virtue, begins to lose her fear, knowing that fear alone is not sufficient to give her eternal life, as I have already told you when speaking of the second stage of the soul. And so she proceeds, with love, to know herself and My goodness in her, and begins to take hope in My mercy in which her heart feels joy. Sorrow for her grief, mingled with the joy of her hope in My mercy, causes her eye to weep, which tears issue from the very fountain of her heart.

“But, inasmuch as she has not yet arrived at great perfection, she often drops sensual tears, and if you ask Me why, I reply: Because the root of self-love is not sensual love, for

that has already been removed, as has been said, but it is a spiritual love with which the soul desires spiritual consolations or loves some creature spiritually. (I have spoken to you at length regarding the imperfections of such souls.) Wherefore, when such a soul is deprived of the thing she loves, that is, internal or external consolation, the internal being the consolation received from Me, the external being that which she had from the creature, and when temptations and the persecutions of men come on her, her heart is full of grief. And, as soon as the eye feels the grief and suffering of the heart, she begins to weep with a tender and compassionate sorrow, pitying herself with the spiritual compassion of self-love; for her self-will is not yet crushed and destroyed in everything, and in this way she lets fall sensual tears — tears, that is, of spiritual passion. But, growing, and exercising herself in the light of self-knowledge, she conceives displeasure at herself and finally perfect self-hatred. From this she draws true knowledge of My goodness with a fire of love, and she begins to unite herself to Me, and to conform her will to Mine and so to feel joy and compassion. Joy in herself through the affection of love, and compassion for her neighbor, as I told you in speaking of the third stage. Immediately her eye, wishing to satisfy the heart, cries with hearty love for Me and for her neighbor, grieving solely for My offense and

her neighbor's loss, and not for any penalty or loss due to herself; for she does not think of herself, but only of rendering glory and praise to My Name, and, in an ecstasy of desire, she joyfully takes the food prepared for her on the table of the Holy Cross, thus conforming herself to the humble, patient, and immaculate Lamb, My only-begotten Son, of whom I made a Bridge, as I have said. Having thus sweetly traveled by that Bridge, following the doctrine of My sweet Truth, enduring with true and sweet patience every pain and trouble which I have permitted to be inflicted upon her for her salvation, having manfully received them all, not choosing them according to her own tastes, but accepting them according to Mine, and not only, as I said, enduring them with patience, but sustaining them with joy, she counts it glory to be persecuted for My Name's sake in whatever she may have to suffer. Then the soul arrives at such delight and tranquillity of mind that no tongue can tell it. Having crossed the river by means of the Eternal Word, that is, by the doctrine of My only-begotten Son, and, having fixed the eye of her intellect on Me, the Sweet Supreme Truth, having seen the Truth, knows it; and knowing it, loves it. Drawing her affection after her intellect, she tastes My Eternal Deity, and she knows and sees the Divine nature united to your humanity.

“Then she reposes in Me, the Sea Pacific, and her heart is united to Me in love, as I told you when speaking of the fourth and unitive state. When she thus feels Me, the Eternal Deity, her eyes let fall tears of sweetness, tears indeed of milk, nourishing the soul in true patience; an odoriferous ointment are these tears, shedding odors of great sweetness.

“Oh, best beloved daughter, how glorious is that soul who has indeed been able to pass from the stormy ocean to Me, the Sea Pacific, and in that Sea, which is Myself, the Supreme and Eternal Deity, to fill the pitcher of her heart. And her eye, the conduit of her heart, endeavors to satisfy her heart-pangs, and so sheds tears. This is the last stage in which the soul is blessed and sorrowful.

“Blessed she is through the union which she feels herself to have with Me, tasting the divine love; sorrowful through the offenses which she sees done to My goodness and greatness, for she has seen and tasted the bitterness of this in her self-knowledge, by which self-knowledge, together with her knowledge of Me, she arrived at the final stage. Yet this sorrow is no impediment to the unitive state, which produces tears of great sweetness through self-knowledge, gained in love of the neighbor, in which exercise the soul discovers the plaint of My divine mercy, and grief

at the offenses caused to her neighbor, weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice — that is, who live in My love. Over these the soul rejoices, seeing glory and praise rendered Me by My servants, so that the third kind of grief does not prevent the fourth, that is, the final grief belonging to the unitive state; they rather give savor to each other, for, had not this last grief (in which the soul finds such union with Me), developed from the grief belonging to the third state of neighborly love, it would not be perfect. Therefore it is necessary that the one should flavor the other, else the soul would come to a state of presumption, induced by the subtle breeze of love of her own reputation, and would fall at once, vomited from the heights to the depths. Therefore it is necessary to bear with others and practice continually love to one's neighbor, together with true knowledge of oneself.

“In this way will she feel the fire of My love in herself, because love of her neighbor is developed out of love of Me — that is, out of that learning which the soul obtained by knowing herself and My goodness in her. When, therefore, she sees herself to be ineffably loved by Me, she loves every rational creature with the self-same love with which she sees herself to be loved. And, for this reason, the soul that knows Me immediately expands to the love of her neighbor, because she sees that

I love that neighbor ineffably, and so, herself, loves the object which she sees Me to have loved still more. She further knows that she can be of no use to Me and can in no way repay Me that pure love with which she feels herself to be loved by Me, and therefore endeavors to repay it through the medium which I have given her, namely, her neighbor, who is the medium through which you can all serve Me. For, as I have said to you, you can perform all virtues by means of your neighbor, I having given you all creatures, in general and in particular, according to the diverse graces each has received from Me, to be ministered unto by you; you should therefore love them with the same pure love with which I have loved you. That pure love cannot be returned directly to Me, because I have loved you without being Myself loved, and without any consideration of Myself whatsoever, for I loved you without being loved by you — before you existed; it was, indeed, love that moved Me to create you to My own image and similitude. This love you cannot repay to Me, but you can pay it to My rational creature, loving your neighbor without being loved by him and without consideration of your own advantage, whether spiritual or temporal, but loving him solely for the praise and glory of My Name, because he has been loved by Me.

“Thus will you fulfill the commandment of the law, to love Me

above everything, and your neighbor as yourselves.

“True indeed is it that this height cannot be reached without passing through the second stage, namely the second stage of union which becomes the third (and final) stage. Nor can it be preserved when it has been reached if the soul abandon the affection from which it has been developed, the affection to which the second class of tears belongs. It is therefore impossible to fulfill the law given by Me, the Eternal God, without fulfilling that of your neighbor, for these two laws are the feet of your affection by which the precepts and counsels are observed, which were given you, as I have told you, by My Truth, Christ crucified. These two states united nourish your soul in virtue, making her to grow in the perfection of virtue and in the unitive state. Not that the other state is changed because this further state has been reached, for this further state does but increase the riches of grace in new and various gifts and admirable elevations of the mind, in the knowledge of the truth, as I said to you, which, though it is mortal, appears immortal because the soul’s perception of her own sensuality is mortified and her will is dead through the union which she has attained with Me.

“Oh, how sweet is the taste of this union to the soul, for, in tasting it, she sees My secrets! Wherefore she

often receives the spirit of prophecy, knowing the things of the future. This is the effect of My Goodness, but the humble soul should despise such things, not indeed in so far as they are given her by My love, but in so far as she desires them by reason of her appetite for consolation, considering herself unworthy of peace and quiet of mind, in order to nourish virtue within her soul. In such a case let her not remain in the second stage, but return to the valley of self-knowledge. I give her this light, My grace permitting, so that she may ever grow in virtue. For the soul is never so perfect in this life that she cannot attain to a higher perfection of love. My only-begotten Son, your Captain, was the only One who could increase in no perfection, because He was one thing with Me, and I with Him, wherefore His soul was blessed through union with the Divine nature. But do you, His pilgrim-members, be ever ready to grow in greater perfection, not indeed to another stage, for as I have said, you have now reached the last, but to that further grade of perfection in the last stage, which may please you by means of My Grace.”

(To be continued)

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