

# THE SERAPH

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# The Seraph

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In essentia - Unitas. In dubio - Libertas.  
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# The Little Way

Bishop Giles, OFM

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The month of October is dedicated to the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Mother. We also celebrate the feasts of Our Holy Father St. Francis and St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Our thoughts are drawn to these particular saints because we find a common thread of theology that is necessary to develop our spiritual lives. We see this: in the hidden life of Mary; in the humility of St. Francis (Friars Minor – little brothers); and in the Little Way of St. Thérèse. The principle virtue of these and of many other saints is that of humility.

Jesus humbled Himself – taking upon Himself our human nature, and in suffering and dying for us upon the cross. We see the humility of Christ as we pray the Rosary. The Rosary allows us to contemplate the Life of Christ as seen through the eyes of the Blessed Mother. We find relatively very little of her life in the Gospels – she is humbly hidden in the background observing and listening. She is greatly humbled and filled with awe as she observes the Life,

Designs, and Will of God play out before her very eyes. Her life is spent in worshipping God in His Humanity. She is unknown and unseen by most of the world – however, she is the mother of God! She humbles herself as she sees that He has humbled Himself for us.

In St. Francis, we see him truly seeking the last place -- humbling himself in every aspect, so that he may ever draw closer to Jesus through imitating the humility of Jesus. The life of St. Francis became the “Mirror of Christ.” Above all the virtues he held out for us to follow is that of humility. This is even manifested in the name of the religious order that he founded: Friars Minor (Little Brothers). He humbly took the very Gospels to heart and sought to put them into practice as literally as possible. All that Jesus has commanded, St. Francis obeyed; all that Jesus counseled, St. Francis took as a command; and all that Jesus expressed a simple desire for, St. Francis received as a counsel. In complete childlike humility, St. Francis avoided the first place

and sought the last and the least place as Jesus has directed us to do.

St. Thérèse would have us adopt her Little Way, where we become little children – the least and therefore, the humblest in the Mystical Body. A child believes naively all that he is told. A child humbly obeys every command. A child realizes his ignorance and asks questions seeking instruction and knowledge. In becoming a spiritual child, we become humble and put into practice the suggestion of Our Lord to become as little children – for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. A humble child does not question the authority over him, but submits; in this, he escapes all culpability for his actions. The commanding authority must be responsible for the actions of his subjects. Truly, the children are free from the responsibilities of any punishable actions that they have done in humble obedience. However, children receive the reward of their good actions that they have done in holy obedience. Even when the child obeys in something that the superior will be punished for, the child still gains the reward for acting in humble and holy obedience. (We must obey in all

things except sin.) This is truly a win-win situation for all the good and humble children. This humility is most pleasing to God and He abundantly rewards us for this. Hence, even in our old age, St. Thérèse would have us strive to become little children.

The works of little children are small and apparently insignificant in the eyes of the world. But, their heart is in it – and God accepts the desire for the deed. In this way, little children outperform and overtake many adults in the spiritual life. God can work best in these souls because they are humble and consider everyone else to be smarter and better informed and to know what is best for them – they have renounced or have never fully taken up their own “self-will.” In absence of this “self-will,” these children are readily molded to fit into the Will of God. They are “putty” in the Hands of God.

In the spiritual life, there are really no big things. The entire spiritual life is made up of many little things. We must not allow pride to dismiss these little things as insignificant or unimportant. If we are faithful in the little things, we will be given greater things in the Kingdom of Heaven. Our daily prayers and even our daily

Rosary may appear as small or insignificant, but those who are faithful in these advance in the spiritual life. Those who are indifferent or careless in these devotions make very little or even no progress at all in the spiritual life. Even the offering of a cup of cold water to one of the brethren merits a reward in Heaven! Do not despise the little things, but be even more faithful in them because they are easier. The command not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the Garden of Paradise was a little and insignificant thing. It was easy to obey, and for that reason, the disobedience was that much worse.

Will of God. She would have us see God's will in our daily lives. We are not to question where God has placed us. As children, we only ask what we are to do. We do not question God or God's right to do anything to or with us.

When God sends us pleasure, joy, or happiness, we are to accept it and rejoice in God and His goodness. We are to be thankful. We are to worship and honor Him. When God sends us pain, suffering, or sorrow we are, likewise, to be thankful (He knows what is best for us. He loves us and this is what is good for us.) We worship and honor Him just the same. The saints would draw even closer to God in these times of trials or tribulations. We find this humility and resignation in the Life of Christ as we meditate upon the mysteries of the Rosary. We find this humility and resignation to God in the life of the Blessed Mother Mary. We find it in the life of St. Francis and in the Little Way of St. Thérèse. It is found in various degrees in every one of the saints. It is for us to understand this and imitate them as they have imitated Jesus. We must all become as little children or we will not find our place in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The breaking of a hard or difficult commandment deserves a lesser punishment than the breaking of an easy commandment. If we are faithful in the little things, we will find the grace to be faithful in the bigger things. If we are unfaithful in that which is easy and what we can do, then we will never be able to obey in the bigger things.

Our Holy Mother the Church prays and labors that all of us become spiritual children. Her labors and instructions are all aimed at conforming us to the

# Question for the Editor

Bishop Giles, OFM

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*Dear Editor,*

*Can you tell me what to do about my ten year old's friend? This friend of my daughter has recently come out as being a "lesbian." They are good friends and spend a lot of time together - even having sleepovers. I struggle between forbidding the friendship, or just closing an eye to it all. I want to do what is morally right, but I also want what is best for my daughter. Any advice is greatly appreciated.*

*A conflicted parent.*

Dear Conflicted Parent,

It seems that your daughter is too young for the discussion that appears necessary. I assume that her friend is of a similar age. On this assumption, this friend, has probably "come out" because it is popular or fashionable – not really because she is interested in sexual relationships with others of the same sex.

If this friend is much older than your daughter, I would suggest that you break off this "friendship" immediately, because your daughter is in harm's way. An

older "friend" is suspect of trying to recruit your daughter to this sexual perversion. It may be difficult, but it is necessary for the good of your daughter. Do it quickly and absolutely. No contact at all. Your daughter may cry a lot at first, but she will get over it. Going back and forth is only courting disaster.

We should begin with an honest and mature discussion with your daughter. It should be adapted to her current level of understanding and faith, but advanced enough to help her understand what is being said to her. Give her enough information, but not too much. This is where the grace of being a good parent comes in. Pray and trust that the Holy Ghost will guide you in teaching your child. Answer her questions honestly and humbly. Do not arouse her curiosity and then leave it unsatisfied. She will find answers, but in all the wrong places with all the wrong answers. We want her consulting her parents, rather than "friends", internet, or social media. Let her know you love her and will answer her honestly and do your best not to embarrass her.

Begin with the obvious things that she knows and advance from there. She knows that girls' bodies are different from boys' bodies. We need her to understand that these differences are created by God and they are good. Her body is not evil, but is good, it is holy and sacred. She is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Her sexual organs are wonderfully and mystically designed by God to cooperate with Him in populating Heaven with new souls. However, God desires that we only use these organs in marriage and for the purpose of cooperating with Him in creating more children of God.

We are or will be tempted to various kinds of sins against these most holy organs that God has given us. We must avoid seeking the pleasure associated with our private parts. This pleasure is good and holy when it is experienced in cooperating with God's design and Will (in holy marriage to bring forth children.) It is evil and an abuse to seek this pleasure and not allow God's Will of making a baby even possible. Hence the various kinds of sins that she may be aware of can be discussed. For example: abortion, adultery, fornication, masturbation, etc. She may not know the terms, but she probably knows about the sins.

Now we can work in the sin of lesbianism. It is not God's will for women to be sexually attracted to other women. The pleasures that are found in these unions are unnatural and immoral. They do not allow for a child to be conceived. They do not provide a stable wholesome environment for children to learn and develop. Etc.

Lastly, you should encourage your daughter to not become alarmed if she is tempted in any of these ways. Temptation is not sin. She should pray frequently for the grace of purity and do all she can to avoid the occasions of sin. If she ever has the misfortune to give into any abuse of her body, she should immediately make an Act of Contrition and go to the Sacrament of Confession as soon as possible. She should not give into despair or hopelessness. There are examples of penitent saints that she may know of. God is eager to forgive and give us the grace to draw closer to Him and avoid these sins in the future. No matter how many times we may fall, we must always get up and begin again.

In addition to this, she should be made to understand that two wrongs do not make a right. Or, we cannot do evil so that good may come from it. If we sin and

a child is illegitimately conceived (outside of marriage) we must not kill this baby and commit a greater sin of murder. If we have the misfortune to fall, let us get up through repentance as soon as possible.

Once your daughter has grasped these basics, make sure she understands the sin of hypocrisy, and pride, as well as the need to practice charity. She must love her friend and seek to help her. She must judge the evil of lesbianism and condemn it. Those who are tempted to this sin should be instructed and led to right use of their sexual organs and to the

love and service of God. Even though we may not suffer the same temptations as others, we all have our own temptations to fight against. It is not sinful to be tempted in these directions, it is sinful when we desire or give into these temptations. If your daughter finds that she cannot agree with this “friend” and cannot turn her back to God, she will most likely seek a different friend who is more in conformity with her own beliefs and practices; and God will have answered your prayer.

May God bless you,  
+Bishop Giles OFM

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## The CHERUB

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

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

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

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



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# Catholic Education and the Ignorance of the Past

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

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## Part II

Perhaps the most basic of problems for Catholic parents today who have a true desire to raise their children as good Catholics are, through no fault of their own, a solid understanding and knowledge of their Catholic heritage.

Heritage in the context as it is used in this article refers to all aspects of Catholic life. These include education (good understanding of the Faith), liturgy and its history, the practice of virtue, a proper Catholic home environment, a special emphasis on the virtues of chastity, purity and modesty, the Catholic attitude one ought have in this world and life (it will necessarily be different) and the proper choosing of friends, etc. This is not meant to be a complete list, but perhaps the more important necessities of a Catholic life especially today.

It has been observed for a number of years that Catholic parents, particularly your own, lack the proper understanding and knowledge of how to more completely raise their children as Catholics. It is indeed a joyful moment when a Catholic

child is born into this world. The effort required by both parents to properly raise their child as a good Catholic, is another matter indeed.

In recent years, parents have often been satisfied with teaching their children the basic catechism and nothing more. The unfortunate end result is a baptized pagan or a Catholic who simply does not have enough knowledge to properly live as he ought although he may have the best of intentions.

When these failures are passed to one, two or three generations, there is nearly a complete loss of Faith and far too many are unaware of this loss. Ignorance can be blissful, but certainly not in this situation. It is indeed a sad tragedy of the worst type especially when there is not a true understanding of what has taken place.

In far too many cases, parents send their children to a public school. They will tell you either they have no choice or they believe the public schools are not so bad that they should refrain from sending their children to them. Depending on the public school, it will undermine the faith and/or morals of the child to various degrees. It may not be

evident to the child or the parent, but the secular, anti-Catholic environment will spiritually poison the child. One of the worst but least obvious effects is to plant the seed of indifference in the mind of the child. There are many obvious attacks upon the soul of the child. Why the parents choose to leave the child in these schools is beyond a reasonable explanation!

The unreasonable excuses given are an indication of the unwillingness of parents to make hard sacrifices for the purposes of giving their children a Catholic education in a Catholic environment. Parents who make this conscious decision have made the wrong decision! To be clear, one is not advocating sending your children to the Modernist schools for they are spiritual poison and death.

There are a few options. The first is to homeschool the child. If the parents are not capable of teaching their children, perhaps joining together with other True Catholic families and have either capable parents teach the children or have a home schooling school provide tutors for the more difficult subjects, especially in high school. There are also numerous acceptable classes available on the internet.

Still another option is Immaculate Heart Academy in Rochester, NY for junior and senior high school

girls. St. Anthony Minor Seminary in Lubbock, TX is an option for junior and senior high school boys. It must be understood in both cases, the girl or boy may not have a religious vocation. This is not required to attend these schools. The goal of these schools is to provide a good Catholic education, both academically and religious in an environment where the student attends Mass each day and has the opportunity to receive the Sacraments regularly. In addition, they are in a setting where they will not be pressured by peers to drink, take drugs or be involved in any immoral activities. There are a variety of activities the student may be take part in depending upon their talents and interests.

One is not able or desirous to go back in time, but one may use the good elements of the Catholic parochial and high school systems of the past to create a Catholic environment for the student to benefit them spiritually and academically. It is our first hope to teach young men and women the Catholic Faith in such a manner that they are well equipped to live as Catholic adults in the world. This environment will also provide an ideal setting for the young man or woman who is considering a religious vocation. Too often today the setting in the home, although it is a Catholic home, is not ideal

for the proper consideration of such a serious decision. The worldly distractions or the lack of understanding of how to assist and encourage a child regarding a religious vocation are but two examples.

Education is a big part of properly raising a child, but teaching the child to love the Faith should hold a higher place for the parent. If the parent only has a catechetical education and is mediocre in his faith, it is highly unlikely he will be a good Catholic example to the child. There is a simple principle in philosophy which applies in this situation; “you cannot give what you do not have.” The Faith and the practice of It, ought to have a supernatural foundation. This foundation is essential in parents for they are the first educators or teachers of the child. If the foundation is built on sand, it will not stand firm during the storms of life.

Alongside living the Faith, the parent ought to have a basic knowledge of the moral issues of today and what the Church teaches concerning these issues. The most important issues of today are abortion, artificial contraception, homosexuality, transgender issue (which is simply accepting the gender God created you), fornication, the abuse of alcohol and

drugs, etc. With close observation one is able to determine that many parents misguide their child on one or more of these issues. A parent should not wonder why a child makes bad decisions, and yes, this may include why their daughters choose to dress immodestly. If a mother does not **correctly** guide the daughter, do not expect the child to do the right thing in today’s pagan climate. This is yet another example of the parent (mother) knowing what is right and setting the correct example.

Much is expected of today’s parents, but no more than those of the past. The only difference is that more parents in the past knew what was right and gave the correct example. Far too many parents today either do not know what is correct or are not concerned with learning that which is correct. The Faith and morals were practiced by more Catholic parents in the past, although imperfectly, and these were confirmed by the Church hierarchy.

Parents must do their very best to create and maintain a Catholic environment in the home. This begins by knowing the Faith and how to put it into practice in the Catholic home.

# Sexual Deviancy

Bishop Giles, OFM

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The perverted use of human sexuality appears to be increasingly shoved in our faces these days. It would be one thing if these misguided souls committed their impure sins behind closed doors, however they seem to desire to flaunt their deviancy in public. This has a two-fold purpose of seeking recognition and legitimization of their habitual sins, as well as to influence others to follow them in their perversity. It is often said that “misery loves company.” The damned in Hell are ever eager to increase their number. Their hatred for themselves causes them to hate everyone, hence the devils and the damned are constantly working for the damnation of others. It appears that the sexual deviants in our society are pursuing the same goal. It is an attempt to obtain legitimization through sheer numbers.

The tactics of these pawns of Satan are demonically clever. The inclination of our fallen nature to rebel against the norms of society, combined with media glitz and glamour that is heaped upon the “star” perverts – entice our youth to follow and imitate them. Added

to this is, the simple aspect of our fallen nature to pursue pleasure even at the cost of pain and suffering to our consciences, as well as to all who truly love us. We are led to accept pleasure instead of happiness. Most sin entices with pleasure promising happiness. The pleasure disappears soon after it is tasted. It promises lasting joy but always fails to deliver it. True happiness is lasting and will continue even in Eternity. Addictions of whatever kind are formed by the pursuit of happiness – but mistakenly accepting momentary pleasure and then forgetting lasting happiness. The addict ends up like the proverbial dog chasing its tail. He pursues empty and fleeting pleasure with ever greater intensity and desire. He wears himself out and makes himself sick – all to obtain the illusive “high” that soon dissipates even if it is obtained.

There is no doubt that pride and vanity play their part in this also. Many, after having fallen into sin through weakness or inattentiveness, do not wish to appear to have fallen, so they boldly claim that they maturely

and deliberately made this choice and now they seek all means available to “justify” it. There is no doubt they experienced pleasure, and so they return to their sins again and again. (The dog enjoys eating so much that it returns to its own vomit.) They rationalize that the pursuit of pleasure is a good and justifiable thing. They will rebel against and denounce anyone who would suggest that they deny themselves this illicit pleasure. Pride will not allow them to see themselves in error so they boldly claim that everyone else is wrong. It is very much like the story of the vain mother watching the children’s parade. She says to her companion: “See how everyone is out of step except my Johnny!” So the sinner would rather condemn everyone else (even God), than admit that he is wrong.

The sexual deviants that the media so boldly shoves in our faces day after day are now losing their “shock value” it is no longer “newsworthy” to report on the homosexuals, or the transgenders. The novelty is wearing thin, so the “victimization” card is now brought into play. They must now play the “victim” to obtain the same recognition. They need the attention to achieve their goals of acceptance and further corruption of others.

As Catholics, we must strive to direct our thoughts, words, and actions according to the Will of God. It is very true that the sins of sodomy and homosexuality are very serious crimes. These sins are, as St. Paul tells us in his epistle to the Romans, the natural consequence of idolatry. When men turn away from God, they turn away from His grace and thus, are forced to seek their own way. Without the light of God’s grace, we are in a very terrible darkness and succumb to the most perverse sins imaginable. The sins of men lusting after men and women lusting after women is the reasonable consequence of turning away from God.

If we strive to return to God, and then logically examine our own existence and purpose – as well as the existence and purpose of our various faculties, then we shall overcome the various perversions that have enslaved so many. There is no doubt that we were made by God and for God. “God made us to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world; so that we may be happy with Him in Heaven.”

Why did God make and give us sexual organs? The obvious answer is found in the Will of God, but also in the very nature of the organs themselves. The sexual organs of male and female are

for the purpose of reproduction. Human reproduction (conception, education, and emancipation) requires a long time and a stable environment. Hence, God has restricted the legitimate use of our sexual organs for reproduction to those who are united in holy Matrimony until separated by death. There is no doubt that there is great pleasure associated with the use of these organs. This pleasure is a reward and enticement for husbands and wives to accept the burden of raising children for God. In cooperating with God in creating souls to populate Heaven, husbands and wives legitimately partake of some of the happiness that God has in His creation.

Any use of these organs that is contrary to this purpose, is illicit and immoral. All those who are not validly married have no right to experience the pleasure of the sexual organs. If we frustrate the purpose of these organs – seeking only their pleasure – we abuse them and insult God. Adultery and fornication are evil because they do not provide the stability of a home environment that is conducive to raising children for and with God. Masturbation or self-abuse seeks the pleasure without accepting any of the responsibilities. To use God's gifts in a way that goes against His Will,

design, and purpose is an insult to God and therefore, sinful.

Imagine giving a nice expensive smart phone to your grandfather, or great-grandfather. He thanks you for the gift. After examining it, he notices a nail sticking out of the trim around the door. He gets up and uses the nice new smart phone to hammer in the nail. Or he places it on his desk to use as a paper weight. We would all be shocked at such an ignorant misuse of the smart phone. When you strive to instruct this man, he then may argue: "Did you not give it to me? Is it not mine to do with as I want?" We can tell him that it has better uses and is much more valuable as a smart phone than as a hammer or a paper weight. He continues: "I like using it as a hammer and a paperweight. I should be allowed to do what I want." These are the equivalent answers that those who pervert the true use of the sexual organs are making. It is an insult to the Designer, Architect, and Creator, as well as an abuse of the gift itself.

In the condemnation of the sexual perversity of the "transgenders" and the "homosexuals and lesbians", we must go further and condemn all sexual perversions. We must condemn: abortion,

contraceptives, adultery, fornication, masturbation, sexual fetishes, and all other abuses. It is truly illogical for us to suggest that seeking one illicit sexual pleasure is okay while another is not. If homosexuality is evil, so is: adultery and fornication, self-abuse, contraceptives and abortion. These are all uses of the sexual organs in manners that frustrate their design and purpose. It is a direct insult to God. It does not matter what the individual person wants or desires – to use them in any way other than for what they were made for is sinful; and therefore, damnable.

If we truly love ourselves, we will seek to remove all these perversions from our own lives, as well as from the lives of all that we love. We are commanded to love everyone, so we must work and pray to remove these perversions from the society all around us. It is a tragedy that these perverts work tirelessly to obtain converts to their unnatural and evil way of life; and the faithful barely lift a finger to convert others to God. “The children of the world are wiser in their ways than the children of light.”

Let us not be afraid to condemn the modern perversions that we see around us; but let us be very cautious that we do not end up

as hypocrites. All perversions of the gift of reproduction must be condemned not just the ones that others are guilty of. The perversions of a “society” do not make them less deserving of condemnation because they have become “legalized” or “acceptable” to that society.

The sin of adultery is not much different than the sin of homosexuality. Marriage makes a man and wife one. In adultery, a man is with another man’s wife (or vice versa). In this union, the man is with another man as the husband and wife are one. Adultery is in fact another form of homosexuality – at least on the spiritual level. What we see before us today is simply another manifestation of the same sins of abuse of our God given gift of sexual reproduction.

It is not for us to compare ourselves to others, but to compare ourselves to Jesus Christ. In this comparison, we are all sinners. We must speak boldly and humbly against all sin – even our own; and always with charity for the sinner. Let us not be afraid to speak against the current abuses we see thrust in our faces; but let us beware that we do not become hypocrites trying to cast the speck from our neighbors’ eye when there is a beam in our own eye.

# A Chance to Live

Monsignor John P. Carroll-Abbing

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## III

### HEROIC HEIGHTS OF UNSELFISHNESS

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

(Continued)

They found a place in which to hide, but the war went inexorably on, the Allies landed in Sicily and started the northward advance. The usual evacuation order came, the usual migration, the blocking of the roads, the truck. First destination Terra Gaia, the second and worse one, if possible, Cesano. The poor country woman, accustomed as she had been to the clear mountain air, to simple, nutritious food, to the meticulous cleanliness of the Abruzzi housewife, suffered the tortures of hell. For the sake of her child she tried to resign herself to the inevitable, hoping against hope that in the near future life as she had once known it might return.

A line of trucks drove up to the camp one morning, empty this time except for the German

soldiers manning them and a petty officer giving sharp commands. The refugees stared and wondered. What was going to happen to them now? Where would they be sent?

Room had to be made for more human cattle. The soldiers had come to take as many as possible farther to the North. Rolls were called, men, women, children, were forced into the waiting trucks.

“Get in ... hurry ... no, you can’t go back for anything ... hurry ... hurry ...” Meek, dazed obedience.

The Abruzzi mother sat in her shed. She did not hear, the name being called. A friend came after her. Trembling in anticipation of what was coming, she rushed out and asked one of the soldiers on guard. He motioned her to follow the others who had preceded her. She refused.

“My boy is out there ... in the fields. Don’t you understand? He is only a little boy ... he needs his mother ... just let me get him ... it won’t take me long to find him. ... Mario ... Mario ...”

No answer. Mario was too far away to hear her. Off went the caravan.

Mario played on for hours. At noon he returned and looked for his mother. No one told him what had happened. He searched, but nowhere was his search rewarded.

He asked, he wept. Someone tried to explain, but he could not understand. Why ... why had his mother left him? She had never done that before. Faces glanced at him, but they were indifferent faces. His was too common a fate to cause any great excitement. What was a lost child more or less, when there were so many others, old, young, sick, dying?

Hours, go by and Mario quiets down. Ten years old, alone, he makes up his mind. He will live by himself and for himself; forget. He locks his feelings tight within himself, plays by himself, eats his soup in a corner, refuses even to speak with anyone. The Allies come. Other boys and girls go off with their mothers. He watches them, then heads for Rome ... alone.

The capital is, crowded with children of all ages, all conditions of life. They have come from Sicily, Le Puglie, Abruzzi, the

southern provinces liberated by the Americans. They are either in rags or clothed in discarded Allied uniforms. Eyes, brown, blue, green or black, but all of them sharp, wary, intelligent, searching.

Mario is lost in the great city. How can an ignorant country boy find friends? He suffers hunger, thirst, weariness. An American soldier finds him on a rainy night, sitting in a doorway, wet, shivering, and takes him with him. For two days he eats, then says good-bye in search of a change. He walks through a park and meets two other boys, alone, lost like himself. The three exchange formalities and he decides to join them. Ten years old, twelve, thirteen.

His companions know a lot more than he. They set to work and teach him all the tricks of the new trade, if such it may be called. He learns how to look pitiful, how to make the passer-by feel sorry for him, how to steal a loaf of bread, how to carry a suitcase and perhaps run away with it, if the chance is given, how to get a free meal. At night when not wandering around, he sleeps in an abandoned boxcar, in an empty house where the garden door can be easily opened. In

a difficult contingency there is a convenient bridge with some protection from a too hot sun or too heavy a rain. Why worry?

A few months pass and the ten-year-old has acquired a new personality. Proficient in his methods, he now teaches others. It is not so bad, this life he is leading. There is food when he is hungry, he sleeps whenever he feels like it, he has money in his pocket, cigarettes are plentiful. Best of all he is his own boss. If he wants to smoke, he can do so without asking anyone's permission.

The indifference that surrounded him at the camp continues. True, he is often pushed around, he is insulted more than once, he is thrown out of many a place, but these things do not matter too much... there are compensations. ...

The home in the Abruzzi mountains, the cow, the little cage he once built for the bird caught in the forest, his father, his mother ... were they really true ... or were they only a dream?

Toward the end of May, the situation had grown worse hour by hour. The Germans tensed and the populations of Rome and of the surrounding areas, expecting

liberation at any moment, broke out in sudden intemperate moves, in uncontrolled, too-evident satisfaction. The long-awaited coming of the Allies resulted into an often-critical analysis of the military operations that daily brought about new changes.

The Romans and the inhabitants of the surrounding regions saw the development of events from their own point of view. The delay in the Allied advance meant for them only prolonged suffering, more air raids, more hunger.

At the beginning of June, however, new signs were apparent in the anxious waiting. The feverish activity in air raids and artillery fire, in radio broadcasts, in war bulletins lacking in detailed accounts of any move by the German armed forces added rumors to the undercover news received surreptitiously over the clandestine radios and circulated in whispers and insinuations, indicating clearly that the stagnant atmosphere was lifting.

Not knowing how long I might be cut off from the capital, after its capture by the Allies, I decided on a hasty trip there.

The next morning I left in a truck directed toward the city.

We drove for a while without meeting any trouble, but cannon fire made us come to a sudden stop. By some lucky chance we managed to get away and we continued on to Rome. I hurried through the business that had brought me there and made ready to return.

But the situation had changed hourly and it was not to be a simple task. News differed, one report often contradicting the one preceding it by a few minutes. Anxiety transpired in speech and glances, but it was an almost relieved anxiety, if such can be the case, the anxiety for the maturing of plans, nurtured for many months in the minds of old and young alike, longed for, prayed for, that the endless problems be solved once and for all. In spite of the fact that some fear for the safety of the capital, tightened many a throat, its citizens felt that the arrival of the Allies would at least mean a definite improvement.

Until midnight, I attempted the impossible in trying to get back to Castel Gandolfo. It was useless. No one was willing to take the chance of driving me there. I finally had to give up the idea, not without remorse at having left my charges in the Castelli,

when my presence might have meant a great deal to them.

The next morning I was told that the Allies had entered Castel Gandolfo, also that the Germans had retreated to the flatlands below. Not knowing how long this state of affairs would continue and unwilling to wait, I decided to find a way of getting through the German lines. It was imperative that I reach the Castelli.

A taxi driver agreed to take me as far out of the city as, in his opinion, safety permitted. We discussed the point of whether to take the Old or the New Appian Way. It was our luck that we settled on the New, for, just then, on the Old Appian the American and German armies started exchanging heavy artillery fire.

I had hoped my driver's limit of safety meant that he would take me far on my way, but I was keenly disappointed. He stopped his machine only a few hundred yards from the Roman Gate through which he had taken me and said firmly that was as far as he would go. He explained that he had to take care of his own skin, that his family, his children were waiting at home and he could not let them down. I understood, got out, and started

on foot. There was nothing else to be done. In Rome, I had heard that the railroad bridge over the Appian Way had been destroyed.

I met few pedestrians. Rome at this point extends a number of miles beyond the gate. Stores locked and barred, a strange atmosphere hung over the neighborhood. Was it the hope of victory or a vision of possible defeat?

The Germans on the far side of a race track sat waiting in armored tanks and threw dark looks at me. I could not figure out whether they were surprised or astonished at my presence on that road. I recalled the way the German soldiers in the Anzio area had once looked at me, but there was a difference here, an uncertainty, an indecision.

No objections, however.

“Let us onward, for the long road doth drive us.”

I kept on going and smiled to myself as I thought of the verse from Dante and figured the miles I still had to travel before reaching my destination.

The greater the distance from Rome, the more numerous the Germans. I left the beaten path and cut across the fields. Bad decision. While on the Appian

Way, the Germans had been sitting quietly in their tanks, here I found them in trenches.

And yet they let me by, none of them taking the trouble of bothering me. I reached a farmhouse, went in and out the back door. I headed for another not far away, and another. How long would I be able to play my little game? I was sure it could not last. How often had I found myself where the battle raged, where the dead lay around me too numerous to be counted, how many times had death stared me in the face! More than once I had admitted to myself that I might end up in rather bad shape, but on that day, on that road, I soon developed a feeling akin to resentment that I might perhaps lose my life when peace seemed to be in sight not only for me, but for thousands of others.

Back to the road again. It turned abruptly at one point. A group of houses prevented me from seeing what lay ahead. I rounded the curve and found myself looking at a line of heavy tanks. They stood there and they pointed toward Rome. I waited, not knowing how to proceed. Before I could make up my mind, the tanks veered unexpectedly and

dashed off in the direction I was bound for ... Albano!

“This really looks like a tank battle,” I said to myself and streaked across the fields.

I had not gone far when I sighted a group of peasants, leaping madly about, waving their arms, yelling.

“We’ve made it! We’ve made it!” I heard.

I puzzled my head about the meaning of the words. As I approached the group, someone shouted. “They have come at last!”

“Who?” I questioned.

“The Americans.”

“Where?”

“There! Look!”

It was really so. They were right. In front of me stood the same tanks I had seen a short while before at the curve in the road. I had taken them for German tanks, now, as I looked more closely, I recognized the American helmets.

They were with us! Grimy, eyes weary and red-rimmed from loss of sleep, shirts caked with mud and grease, sweaty, fagged out, they lolled by the side of the road, leaned against their tanks,

crouched on a broken wall, the boys who had come from another world to make me happy on a sunny afternoon.

“Un Sacerdote,” (A priest.) a voice called out. I answered in English.

“American?” from another.

“No, Irish.”

“Where did you come from?”

“From Rome.”

They rushed at me then, amazed, grinning sheepishly, happy as youngsters, plied me with questions. Why this, why that ... on and on. One of them left the tank on which he had been leaning and joined the others. He knelt before me.

“Bless us, Father,” he asked simply.

The sinking sun cast its soft radiance of crimson and gold. The Appian Way, pointed onward, a glistening blade of steel slashing the green of the countryside. Peasant faces trembled with emotion as the youthful heads of the American boys bent to receive the blessing of God. I prayed for their safe return to America.

One of the lads had not moved from where he stood. He leaned against a tank, a child in his

arms, caressing him, wordlessly, automatically, his gaze lost in space. Was he thinking of his own little one at home, of the crosses scrawled at the end of his mother's letter received perhaps just the day before? He stood there thoughtful, dreaming his dream, the dream the same in the mind of any soldier of any land. A dream of returning home and soon to Robert, Mike, Hans, or Antonio. The child in his arms nibbled contentedly on a long-awaited chocolate bar.

My trip to Castel Gandolfo was rapidly accomplished ... in an American jeep — Joe's jeep — that was placed at my disposal by the officer in charge. We tore up the hills, the trees flashed by, the fields disappeared one by one, the ruined houses did not look so hopeless. ...

“We shall rise again ... give us a little time ...” I thought I heard them whispering as we dashed along.

What was that? What was happening? The pealing of thousands of bells shut off all other sounds, the deep tones of huge bronze bells, the tinkle of others. The message, the same ... thanksgiving ...

Castel Gandolfo! My friends

caught sight of me. I was surrounded by a shouting, weeping, praying, hysterical crowd. Hands were stretched out to me. I jumped out of the jeep ... the bells pealed on. ...

“Rome is liberated ...”

“Not yet, but it is only a question of hours ...” “But then how did you get here?”

“I left the capital ...” and I told the story of my escape. ...

*To be continued.*

**THE MAKING OF A GOOD  
WILL OR TRUST:  
HAVE YOU REMEMBERED  
GOD?**

**LET YOUR BLESSINGS  
CONTINUE TO BLESS  
OTHERS BY  
REMEMBERING  
THE FRANCISCANS AND  
THEIR WORK IN YOUR  
WILL OR TRUST!**

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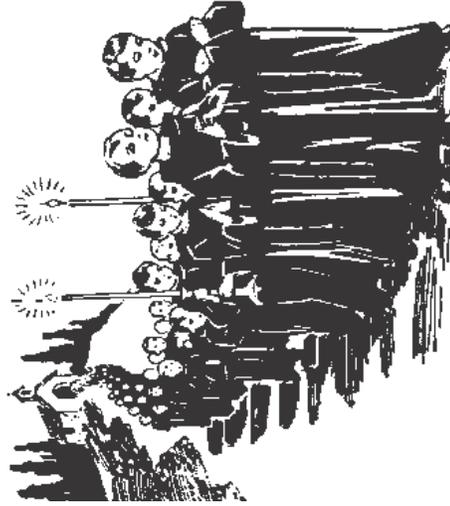
## *Sister Agnes' Favorites*

I am going to reveal to you the secret of sanctity and happiness. Every day for five minutes control your imagination and close your eyes to the things of sense and your ears to all the noises of the world, in order to enter into yourself. Then in the sanctity of your baptized soul (which is the temple of the Holy Ghost) speak to that Divine Spirit saying to Him:

*Oh, Holy Ghost, beloved of my soul...I adore You. Enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me. Tell me what I should do...give me Your orders. I promise to submit myself to all that You desire of me and to accept all that You permit to happen to me. Let me only know Your will.*

If you do this, your life will flow along happily, serenely and full of consolation even in the midst of trials. Grace will be proportioned to the trial, giving you the strength to carry it and you will arrive at the gates of Paradise laden with merit. This submission to the Holy Ghost is the secret to sanctity.

Cardinal Mercier



# Franciscan Saints

OCTOBER 20

THE SERVANT OF GOD  
ALEXANDER OF HALES

Confessor, *First Order*

Alexander was a native of England. He does not, however, take his name from his native place, but from the convent of Hales, where he received his education. About the year 1220, he taught theology in the renowned University of Paris and distinguished himself there as much by his piety as by his learning.

In devotion to our Lady, he made a vow that he would accede to any request made of him in her name. And so the annals of the Franciscan Order relate that a good brother from one of the new convents in Paris called at his home while out questing one day, and asked the celebrated professor in the name of the Blessed Virgin to join his poor order. Alexander was at first much perturbed, but perceiving

in this invitation a call from heaven, he yielded.

In the year of his probation, he was once severely tempted to lay aside the coarse garment. The following night, he saw in a dream our holy Father St. Francis laden with a very heavy cross which he was endeavoring to carry up a steep hill. Filled with compassion, Alexander advanced to assist him, but he heard our holy Father say: "Begone, miserable man! If you cannot carry the light cross of wool, how can you presume to carry this heavy cross of wood?" On awakening, the novice was relieved of the temptation; he persevered in the observance of the rule to the end of his life.

As a Friar Minor Alexander continued to teach at the

university, laying the foundation for Scholasticism, a system of knowledge which marvelously explains the truths of the Faith and defends them against objection even to our own day. For this, Alexander was honored with such titles as the Irrefutable Doctor, the Master of Doctors, and the Fountain of Life. From this source, his accomplished pupils St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas drew their wisdom. Someone once asked St. Thomas what course in theology he would recommend. St. Thomas replied: "There is just one theologian whom you need to master." Being asked who that theologian was, he named Alexander of Hales.

Though he had become famous and enjoyed honors, which he justly deserved, Alexander always remained a humble Friar Minor. He always considered himself the lowly son of the Handmaid of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin, who had directed him to the order. He died while invoking her name on October 20, 1245.

## ON LOVE FOR OUR LADY

1. How fervent must have been the love of this learned man

for our Blessed Lady, since he vowed never to turn down a request that might be made of him in the name of Mary. And what admirable proof he gave of this love, when for it he left the world and entered the poor order of the Friars Minor. It appears that our Lady considered him particularly worthy of the order because of his love for her. As we are told by St. Bonaventure, our holy Father St. Francis cherished an indescribable love for Mary and desired that his children should do likewise. The convent of St. Mary of the Angels became the cradle of the order, and St. Francis gave us the Immaculate Conception as the special mother and patron of the order. And so the children of St. Francis not only honor the Blessed Virgin as the Mother of God, but they love her as their own mother, given to them in a more intimate way than to ordinary Christians. St. Stanislaus, on being asked whether he also loved Mary, answered: "Why should I not love her? She is my mother, isn't she?" — Do you love her tenderly as a good child should?

2. Consider that true devotion to Mary must show itself in deeds, first and above all in a

God-fearing life. Mary says to us what she once said to the servants at the wedding feast of Cana: “Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye” (John 2:5). But our love for Mary will manifest itself also in the veneration we tender her: greeting her morning, noon, and night with the recital of the Angelus, having a picture or statue of her in our rooms, wearing the medal or the scapular of the Blessed Virgin, saying the rosary, keeping her feasts with special devotion and filial joy. He who sincerely venerates our Lady will also strive to promote devotion to her in others. — Have you been sincerely devoted to our Lady in the past?

Listen to what the Church itself says of the Mother of God in the canonical hours: “I love them that love me: and they that in the morning early watch for me, shall find me.” And again: “He that shall find me, shall find life and shall have salvation from the Lord.” St. Alphonsus is right when he says that it is a sign of predestination if we love Mary, and then makes this statement: “A true child of Mary will never be lost.”

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

*(At Prime)*

*O God, who didst vouchsafe to choose the immaculate body of blessed Mary for Thy dwelling, grant, we beseech Thee, that we who are shielded under her protection, may by Thy grace join with gladness in her commemoration. Who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen.*

3. Consider how fortunate they are who truly love our Lady. They will be loved in turn by her, and they are, so to say, certain of their own salvation.

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## THE 2018 FRANCISCAN CALENDAR

This simple, attractive calendar lists all the traditional feasts of the Roman Catholic Church and the traditional Franciscan feasts. This year’s calendar features many inspiring quotes from the saints. Illustrations are from the Latin Franciscan Altar Missal.

### **Order yours today!**

The suggested donation is \$20.00 per calendar.

THE SERAPH

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## Corpus Christi Construction Update

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

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

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

You may follow the progress of the construction in pictures on our website [www.catholichour.org](http://www.catholichour.org). Click onto the construction picture on the front page.

*Donations may be sent to:*  
Corpus Christi Church  
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## The Sunday Sermon

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

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# THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

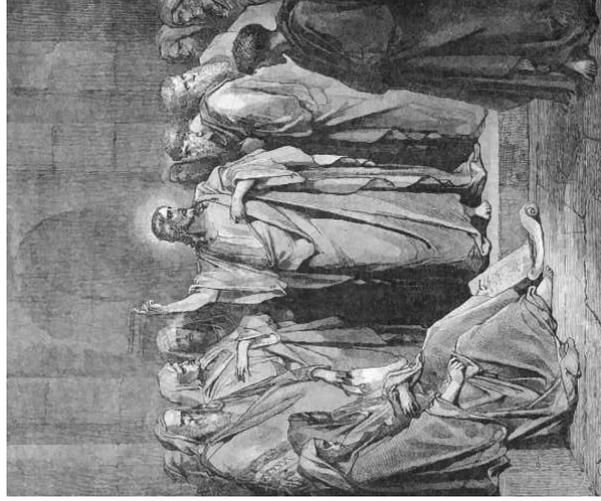
OR,

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

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

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

1834.



## CONSIDERATION XV.

### ON THE DANGER OF PUTTING OFF OUR REPENTANCE.

THERE are few individuals so completely lost to all sense of their own salvation as not sometimes to flatter themselves that, before the close of life, they shall make their peace with their perhaps long offended God; and do something towards the recovery of their eternal happiness. Such as these are the plans and expectations of the generality even of the greatest sinners: for, not even would these give up all hope as lost for all the satisfactions that this world can offer.

Amongst the various illusions which impose upon our reason, there is not, perhaps, anyone that is more dangerous or more fatal to us than the blindness and flattery of this security. For, what under its deceitful shelter is the case? Under it, we live on easy in our sins, adding each day to their multitude; and heaping up to ourselves fresh treasures of the divine displeasure. Intoxicated by the fumes of our passions, or lulled to indolence by our self-love — we *sleep*. We sleep, and then foolishly imagine, that the justice of God is asleep also, like ourselves. We mistake His silence for patience; and His forbearance for mercy, — unawares that the very silence and forbearance of

God, are frequently the severest of His judgments. He waits, indeed, because He is merciful; but He waits only because we are always in His hands. “*I will awaken,*” He says, “*upon the sinner, for his destruction.*” In reality, can anything be more insulting to the goodness of God than the circumstance of thus proposing to return to Him, only when we can enjoy the satisfactions of sin no longer; or when we are tired and disgusted with the pleasures of a worldly life? This is treating God, not as a friend, but an enemy. And hence, therefore, the above strong expression of His indignation. But besides all this, when we consider the shortness and precarious tenure, of our lives; and above all, the nature and uncertainty, of grace, — there is in such conduct a piece of madness which, in the eyes, not only of religion but of reason itself, ought to appear almost unaccountable. It resembles the folly of the man, who allows himself willfully to suffer shipwreck because he hopes that by some accident or other, a plank may chance to fall in his way that will carry him in safety to the shore. Accordingly, everything both in religion and in reason bids us seize on the favorable occasion whilst we may; and not put off from day to day. In religion, all

its oracles and commands; its threats and its terrors; its figures and its examples — all tend to prove to us this alarming truth, that nothing is more displeasing to God; nor more ruinous to our salvation, than the delay of our repentance.

1. The passages in the Scripture which relate to this awful subject, besides being numerous are at the same time, particularly striking. “Seek the Lord,” says the prophet, “whilst YET He may be found.” “Walk,” says St. John, “whilst you have light, lest soon the darkness come and overtake you. Watch, and pray, because you know not the day nor the hour . . . At the hour, when you least expect it, the Son of Man shall come.” Such as these are some of the *Invitations*, *suggested to us by the tenderness of the eternal wisdom.*

In like manner, let us consider some of its threats. “*You shall seek Me,*” says God to the sinner, “*and you shall not find Me.*” You have, during your career in the world, neglected, and abandoned Me; and therefore, (for I shall have My day too) I will, at your death, deliver you up to your just fate: “*And I will LAUGH in your destruction; and you shall die in your sins.*” It is thus too that we are repeatedly forewarned that

the specter of death shall steal suddenly upon us like the thief in the night, when we least expect it — surprising us in the arms of sleep; and in the lethargy of sin. — In the parable of the foolish virgins who fell asleep while they were waiting for the arrival of the spouse, we are taught to trace alike the imprudence, and the danger, of false security. In the dead of the night, the spouse arrived. They instantly presented themselves — their lamps untrimmed — and they were rejected with the reproach — “**I know you not.**”

Yes; and not only this; but, on the few occasions which are cited to us in the Scriptures, where we find even the strongest expressions of sorrow for sin and regret for the imprudence of delay — we find, that even then such sorrow was fruitless; such regret of no avail. Thus Esau — the figure of imprudent sinners — had lost his birthright. He repented sincerely of his folly. But, his repentance came too late. The blessing was forfeited and lost forever. Thus, Antiochus wept; and sighed; and prayed; and humbly craved for pardon. But his tears, and sighs, and sorrows, like those of Esau, coming too late, availed him nothing.

From these examples, and still more from the foregoing precepts, we ought to draw this conclusion, that if during our career of health we continue deaf to the voice of God; and indifferent to the inspirations of His grace — putting off our conversion from day to day — we ought, in such case, to infer, either that the time of repentance may not — will not — be allowed us; or that, if it should be allowed, our repentance will probably be false; and we shall die in our sins. Such, at least, are the inferences, which, referring to the principles and instructions of the Holy Scriptures, we ought in prudence to deduce if we love our own security.

II. In reply to these clear and often repeated maxims; and by the way of apology for our delays, we frequently remark — at least, the obstinate sinner often, with complacency remarks — that the laborers in the vineyard who are related in the Gospel to have been called only at the close of the day — at the eleventh hour — received precisely the same recompense as those who had been hired in the morning — at the first hour. Now the truth is that even this, though seemingly a specious, is, after all, a very feeble argument. For, there is this difference between the delaying sinner, and the laborers

here alluded to that these were, all of them, waiting and wishing to be employed. They were standing in the market-place only unoccupied because no one came to engage them. Once engaged — they instantly set to work. Whereas what is the case with the delaying sinner? He continues indolently living on in the midst of his pleasures; or in the habitual indulgence of his passions — neither seeking a reconciliation with his God nor attending to the voice of religion, which urgently calls upon him to undertake the important task.

In like manner, there are persons — although the number of these may be few — who go so far in defense of their own indifference, as to cite the example of the good thief who was mercifully forgiven even in the very act of expiring. But, alas, this is not so much an authority to be quoted as an encouragement to procrastination, as an extraordinary prodigy. The sinner, who so often called upon and admonished, still refuses to return to God, cannot most certainly with anything like rational confidence pretend to expect such a miracle of grace as that was. But, not only this: — The conversion of the good thief, in the article of death, is the only example of such a blessing that

occurs in the whole series of the sacred pages. He was converted, it is true, but it was by the very side of Jesus just expiring and sprinkled with the Blood of the adorable Victim. Meanwhile, let us only cast a look on His other hand. There we behold with consternation the other thief dying in despair under the self-same shelter of his suffering Saviour. Such example is, therefore, no encouragement for our delays.

III. But, it may be the case that we propose, ere long — and perhaps even very soon — to renounce the pursuits of sin, and steadfastly to resume the cultivation of virtue. Such, no doubt, are the designs of many sinners who had formerly tasted the delights of piety, have by the torrent of a bad example, been hurried away into the streams of worldly pleasures. “But, then,” they say, “we cannot well, just now, undertake the task. We have engagements upon our hands, which for the present, make it inconvenient; and our passions have not, as yet subsided into that calmness which renders its accomplishment practicable. By and by, however, we will begin the important revolution.” Now all this, though flattering to self-love, is but mere trifling with salvation. It is a positive resistance to God’s injunctions, which command us

and to His mercies which invite us to be converted without any delay or hesitation whatsoever. It is too, an insolent assumption of the supposed certainty, both of the time and the grace, which are required to effect the great work of a conversion. In relation to time, we cannot but know it well — there is nothing more precarious. God has retained the possession and disposal of time entirely to Himself; inasmuch that we are not sure of one single day. It is so again with grace — that main essential in the business of our reconciliation. Grace is at least equally uncertain as time. God is infinitely jealous of the sacred gift. He bestows it willingly upon us, whenever sincerely repenting we embrace it readily. But He tenaciously withholds it, whenever He foresees, either that we shall abuse; or when offered shall refuse to accept instantly the salutary boon. Whence the consequence is, in relation both to time and grace — that if we wish to entertain any well-founded assurance of salvation, our plan must be not to daily with the business of our reformation, but AT ONCE — no hesitation or puts off — earnestly to set about it — saying to ourselves in the words of the Psalmist, “*Now I have said; now I have begun . . . I have sworn, and am determined*

*to keep the commandments of Thy law.”*

IV. We very generally entertain an exceedingly erroneous and often fatal opinion concerning the nature of a true conversion. We suppose such revolution easy; or at all events, a task of no very perplexing difficulty. We imagine that as we have formed our chains ourselves, so we can easily unloosen them — or as we have been the authors of our own propensities, so we can of course, as readily alter and reform them. Unhappy mistake! for so far is this from being the case that of all serious difficulties, the work of a real conversion from a life of habitual sin to a life of virtue is one of the most arduous — so arduous indeed, that St. Jerome asserts (his assertion, let us hope, is but the echo of his too trembling timidity) that, “*out of thousands, who attempt the important task, there is hardly one so fortunate as to accomplish it,*” — that is, to be converted truly. The fact is, that to subdue bad habits; to change our inclinations; to hate what we have hitherto loved, and to love what we have long disliked — these are obstacles which it is not easy to overcome. Indeed, not only this — but they are fetters — bolts of iron so strong and massive, that not a giant’s strength, but only the

most powerful grace can break them asunder. At all events, it is vain to imagine that indolence, or any ungenerous effort, can effect so great a conquest. Hence, therefore, again the danger of delay. What is difficult today will be more difficult tomorrow, and passions which are strong at present may soon by indulgence become invincible. It is with the disorders of the soul as it is with those of the body: — they are most easily cured when early attended to — irremediable often when, for a length of time neglected. “Now” — that is, the present day — “*is the acceptable time.*”

V. These circumstances seriously considered — we cannot but feel how very little reliance is to be placed on those supposed conversions or alleged repentances, which we often witness, in the cases of sickness; and on the bed of death. For in the first place, it cannot easily be imagined that a few hours’ or a few days’ illness can well suffice to eradicate habits; to change inclinations; to break asunder the chains of sin which have been, perhaps, fast riveted to the heart by long years of indulgence. The new man is not, in general, thus created in an instant; neither are our bad propensities to be uprooted by such transient

efforts. Sickness has not any advantages beyond health to produce these wonderful effects. Under the pressure, indeed, of sickness, when the force of our passions is suspended; and when the apprehensions of eternity are present to our minds, we then appear to relent; and express even a deep regret for the errors of our misspent lives. Alas; all this we too often discover is little else than the mockery of penance — the artificial movements of the heart — the struggles of nature distressed with pain, much rather than the motions of grace excited by the hatred of sin or the love of God. For, what is the ordinary conduct of our sick penitents when they are so fortunate as to recover their health? Why, the very same, most commonly, that it was before their illness. Proof this — that nearly all these fine and supposed conversions, which we witness on the bed of death, are in reality not in the heart of the sinner, but in the mouth; not in his conscience but in his imagination.

The work of a true conversion is in fact too important a revolution to suppose that it can be well completed during the short interval of a short and painful malady. For let us only calculate a few of the distresses which oppress the suffering patient. He

is overwhelmed with sickness and languor; tormented, perhaps with pain; his mind distressed; his thoughts confused — agitated by the desire of life; terrified by the apprehensions of death — whilst the tears and afflictions of his family, and the necessity, it may be, of still attending to his temporal concerns, come in to increase his anguish and to disturb the few moments of his repose. Under circumstances like these, it is hard to imagine that a business of all others the most momentous can be so well conducted as to fit the unhappy sufferer to prepare, as he should do, for the awful solemnity of his approaching trial.

The real truth is that we, nearly all of us, die as we live. It is most probable, that unless we instantly embrace the proffered mercies of our God, we shall each of us die as we live at present. It is a very mistaken notion to suppose, that death and life are unlike each other. They are very similar — if at all distinguished: for death is only life concluding; — just as the waters of a stream when they disappear, are still the same as when they flow in our sight before us. But, above all, it is true that old age which is considered as the remedy for sin is beyond any other season of life the least fitted

for a work of a real conversion. Experience, every day proves this. It proves that the aged sinner is always the hardest to reform. His years and accumulated vices render him callous and inflexible. His sins, like a mortal poison, penetrate to the very marrow of his bones; and he carries them with him to the grave. To expect, therefore, as too many do, the conquest of our passions from the mere effect of years is a piece of folly. Old age but reaps, what youth had sown.

Wherefore, let us consider well. Let us, at once and in good earnest return to God. He has long and often, sought after us. He has often spoken to our hearts; often reproached our ingratitude; and shown us His judgments. There is not a path in which He has not pursued us; not a truth which He has not pressed upon us. In short, He has employed every artifice and expedient to win our hearts; and to attract us to His service — love, kindness; the joys of heaven; the punishments of hell; the instability of human life; &c. Let us then remember well those words of the Holy Ghost: — “*Put not off from day to day.*” Even tomorrow, for aught we know, may be too late.

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