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Unity

Bishop Giles, OFM

Jesus has prayed for the Church that She may be one, as He and the Father are One. (St. John 17:21) This unity of the Church has been under assault since the beginning. In our own days, we see just how clever and successful evil spirits have been in destroying Her.

From the earliest days of the Church, there were various schisms and heresies assailing the unity of the Church. It seems that every age throughout the history of the Church is faced with one or more of these. The Protestant revolution of the sixteenth century set in motion a continual splintering away of the Body of the Church. With the introduction of the idea that the Bible is the only source of revelation and that everyone may self-interpret the Sacred Scriptures, the fractures and divisions continue almost without end.

The Council of Trent fought hard to combat the evils of Protestantism and defined very clearly the True doctrine (teaching of Christ). The Council pointed out and condemned many of the heresies (false teachings) of the new religions. However, the evil work was already in motion and many souls were led away in search of whatever particular “teaching” tickled their ears. It is very seductive to find a Church that caters to our own particular fancies or to be able to start one of our own.

The truth was soon shattered as each sect claimed to have its own “truth.” Objective reality was ignored as men twisted the truth so that it became their own “truth.” It is said that there are as many opinions as there are heads. Today, people claim that their own opinions are their own personal truths. They have replaced objective reality with their own subjective whims. The Truth has been replaced with a “truth” which, in reality, is a lie. It is the same crime of Lucifer. He denied the Truth of God’s supremacy and made his own subjective “truth” – that serving God is beneath him. This pride is a direct attack upon The Truth, and The Truth is God; so the devil’s foolish assault upon the Truth was an assault against God. Thus, the Protestants in the protesting against the Church have imitated the very sin of Lucifer.

The Church has agonized over the loss of these souls from the very beginning. While the condemnations of the Council of Trent often sound harsh or rigid at first glance; when we look closer we see in these decrees a concerned and loving correction of a true mother. She is harsh in her warnings and condemnations, but very quick and gentle in Her pardons. Nonetheless, we see that the gate of Protestantism was open and the tide of souls flowing out of the Church through that open

gate was immense. The allure and temptation that the devils gave into has also worked, and continues to work, in bringing down men.

There is no doubt that as time progressed matters became worse. The Church became infiltrated with men who were either Masons and Satanists at heart or were truly members of these evil sects. The Devils have shown us their clever tactics. They have created the problem, and then they offer their solution. The problem was this splintering and breaking up of the Church into the many and varied Protestant (heretical and schismatic) sects. The solution was liberalism, where all doctrine becomes relative and indifferent. This liberalism was brought to the forefront in the false Second Council of the Vatican. In an attempt to restore unity, a false ecumenism was embraced. Instead of bringing the splintered and separated members back into the Church and reuniting them, the liberal Modernists denied the Church's doctrines (teachings of Christ) to follow the errors of those who had left. These Modernists were not happy in just leaving, their intention was to bring down and destroy what was left of the One True Church. In throwing out the doctrines of Christ and the Church, the Protestants who left could easily come back. There was nothing objectionable to them anymore. Thus the public was fed a tale of "charity" and concern for unity, all the while every truth was

being undermined. As they sought only that which unites them and not that which divides them, they were left with nothing in the way of Truth at all. What was the cause of division that had to be ignored and thrown out? This "Sign of Contradiction," this source of division, is Jesus Christ. It is the same sin of the fallen angels. To them, God is the source of division – in eliminating God then they eliminate divisions – all can be one in Hell.

The Modernists of the false Vatican II Church had to destroy the Mass where the source of division (Jesus Christ) is made present. The sacrifice that caused a division between those that believe and follow Him and those that will only follow demons had to be eliminated. But to eliminate this would be too shocking to many so they simply changed it from a sacrifice to a memorial meal. They assaulted the miracle of Transubstantiation. All the while pretending to honor Him, they were out to destroy Him. It is no different than the evil Jews who approached Jesus to entrap Him when they said: "Good Master..."

True ecumenism brings souls into the true Church. The false ecumenism of the Novus Ordo (New Order Vatican II church) seeks to destroy the true Church and bring about a unity in sin. The devils do not care what sin you cling to, or what heresy or schism you subscribe to, their only concern is that you do not love God. The Novus Ordo acts in exactly the

same manner. Every false concept or teaching must be embraced – the only thing that must be rejected is the Truth, that “Sign of Contradiction” – Jesus Christ.

There were a few Catholics that refused to go down this path and many others that woke up and returned to the Faith of their Fathers in the Church – boldly holding on to the traditions and teachings of the Church. These were made to appear to the world as the splinter group rather than the main body. And in truth, they were only a small number compared to the majority that followed the “Pied Piper” of Vatican II into the false unity of Protestantism.

Lest there be any success in this remnant, the devils were sure to plant their own agents within. With all the outward appearances of tradition, these double agents nonetheless continually made overtures to unite with the Modernists Church of the Novus Ordo. They became another “Pied Piper” (Ref: “The Pied Piper of Hamelin” by Robert Browning) to lead the Children of God to their own destruction with enticing song and dance. Thus the remnant has been fractured over and over again by these instruments of devils.

With confusion and distrust cleverly sewn into the fibers of the remnant Church by these false “Traditionalists” the splintering continues. The true papacy was ended with the election and acceptance of a heretic. Such an election is invalid

because a heretic is outside the Church and is not Catholic. A heretic, therefore, is incapable of being the head of the very body he is not a part of. A false pope is the demonic “fifth column” attacking from within. He is the one that opened the gates (or the window) to let the “smoke of Satan” (“Pope Paul VI”) enter in. While he held onto the structure and enough outward appearances of the Church, the majority accepted him and opened their hearts and minds to Protestant (false) doctrine. A new Protestant sect was made through the destruction of the Church. Through a process of gradualism, one after another of the doctrines of the Church were ignored and then denied. It was a reinterpretation of doctrines rather than a simple translation into the vernacular (modern languages).

Many of those in the “traditional” movement wanted to be united to a pope, and this is true and good. The only problem was that these “popes” were not Catholic. Therefore, many theories were presented.

The first is that this man may be a bad pope but he is still the pope. Like having a bad father – he is still your father. Being bad and having personal sins is not the same as being a heretic and denying the Truth. Heresy cuts that member off from the Body – The Church. The suggested solution to a bad pope is that we only have to obey him in what is right. This is also a false interpretation of the Fourth Commandment and the teaching of the Church. We

must obey true authority in all that is not sinful. Right or wrong is not the issue. If a true authority says: do not go here. Then we must obey because it is not sinful to refrain from going to a particular place. If a true authority says do not construct any more places of worship, then we must obey, as it is not sinful to refrain from a particular act – even an ostensibly good act. The only time we may legitimately disobey him, is if he instructs us to commit sin. A command to commit sacrilege may be legitimately disobeyed. A command to abstain from saying Mass must be obeyed, as it is not sinful to refrain from a good act. Many times in history priests have been punished or corrected by denying them the right to offer Mass. If a true pope commands a true priest to not offer Mass, that priest is bound to obey him under holy obedience. It is not for the priest to say, “this is not right and I do not have to obey.” That is a wrong interpretation of the Fourth Commandment. However, if this is not a true authority (not a real pope) then he cannot command and we do not have to obey.

There is a second theory that suggests to us that the man presented to the world as the pope is “a material pope but not a formal pope.” He has the body of a pope but not the soul of a pope. A body sits on the throne of St. Peter, but it is a body without a soul. A religious “zombie” of sorts that is to be honored and respected, but again – not obeyed. We are then

free to judge his instructions and determine which ones are good and which ones are bad and then we are free to pick and choose what we want. (Not differing much from the Protestant sects.) When this is done it is tantamount to saying he is not a pope. He is not the one to lead, govern or judge; because he is the one that must be judged. A true demonic inversion of order with the subject judging the superior.

The only honest and logical conclusion is the one that was first presented by Bishop Ngo: “The office of St. Peter is empty” we are in a state of “Sede Vacante” (The Throne of St. Peter is Vacant). The man presenting himself to the world is NOT the pope. We are currently without a true pope. The Church does not die with the death of a pope. The Church is Apostolic and as long as there are true successors to the Apostles, then the Church remains. Christ is the Head of the Church – a true pope is His Vicar (a visible principle of unity among bishops). It is the Vicar of Christ that has been struck, not Christ Himself. Jesus Christ still remains in Heaven and upon the altars of every valid priest who validly offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The visible shepherd has been struck and the sheep have scattered, but the principle of unity remains in all that Jesus Christ and the true Church has left us from two thousand years of history.

The tragedy is that we often forget that it is not enough to have valid

sacraments, we also need them to be licit – legitimate or legal. Schisms separate true priests from the Church, but it does not take away what they already have of true orders. It is illegal or inappropriate for them to use their powers outside of the true Church. Such valid but illicit actions are real and true, but they are without grace. Only from within the Church do we receive sacramental grace. In states of emergency, the Church teaches us that we may receive some sacraments (Penance and Extreme Unction) from the hands of schismatic priests if no other is available. Many “traditionalists” went this route and frequented these sects for sacraments considering that it is a constant state of emergency or a constant state of “in articulo mortis.” However, in regularly receiving and associating with those outside the Church, they became one with them in their schism. As such, they may have valid sacraments but they lack the grace from them. They may even receive Holy Orders validly, but they again lack the grace of the sacrament. It should be obvious to our readers of the dangers of valid priests without the grace of the priesthood.

The visible principle of unity has been struck and the sheep have been scattered, but the invisible Jesus Christ, The True Head of the Church, remains for all true Catholics to unite to. There remain true Catholic Bishops and thus the Church is not dead. We are to seek

out the true, valid and licit bishops and their priests if we desire to be Catholic and receive valid and fruitful sacraments – which gives us the spiritual food (grace) that we need for our souls.

It is not pretty in the Remnant Church. Pretty is in the Novus Ordo and the Protestant and Schismatic churches. In the Remnant Church, we find ourselves beneath the Cross, upon which hangs our beaten and bloody God, drained of all human life and blood. The Mystical Body of Christ is undergoing the same life/death that Jesus did when He walked this earth. We cling to the teachings of the Church, Her rituals and practices, all the while the world tells us that these are dead and we should leave them and move on. The true Church is laughed at, mocked, and ridiculed by the rest of the world for holding onto a “dead body.” Our faith tells us that God is not dead. The Body of Jesus rose from the dead, and so will the Mystical Body of Christ (The Church) rise with Him in the End. Not many wanted to follow Him to Jerusalem and Calvary. Very few did. Likewise, few today will stand with The Church (The Mystical Body of Christ) as She suffers the rejection and scorn of the world. It may not be pretty being alone beneath the Cross of Our Lord, however, it is the most beautiful place to be in all the earth. It is only here that we will ever find true unity.

A FRANCISCAN VOCATION

A Franciscan Vocation

A Vocation: What Is It?

A vocation in the restricted sense of the word is a special call by God to a higher life of dedication in the service of God. A Religious vocation is God's special call of an individual to a more perfect way of life.

The degree of perfection is measured by the degree of the dedication. This means that the perfection to be reached is in proportion to the Institute that one enters and who's Rule one faithfully observes. There are nine choirs of angels and each choir has its own perfection. But, this perfection differs among the choirs. They are not equal. The highest perfection belongs to the highest choir of angels, namely, the Seraphim

Thus, those whom God has chosen from all eternity to strive for this highest perfection are called to the Seraphic way of life. This way of life is to be found in its perfection in the Franciscan Order which is also known as the "Seraphic Order".

The Franciscan Rule is what every Franciscan binds himself before God to observe. Fidelity

to this Rule leads to the gradual transformation of the individual into another Christ Who was humble and obedient until death. This is what is meant when the Scriptures tell us "to put on Christ".

The Rule of the Order of Friars Minor was approved by Pope Innocent III on April 16, 1210. It is not, therefore, like the many post-Vatican II groups that have sprung up without any kind of Church approval. It is a Religious Order that has produced many great and famous saints, both men and women.

We differ from other Franciscans in that we have remained faithful to the Roman Catholic Church and the Franciscan Rule, while others have embraced Modernism and the consequent infidelity to Church and Rule.

The spiritual formation of aspirants, candidates, and members of the Order follows the traditional and sound principles of spirituality proper to the Franciscan Order in its distinct seraphic thrust to the mystical contemplation of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Jesus said to Philip: "Philip, he who sees Me,

sees the Father.” Therefore, to understand the humanity of Jesus opens the door to His divinity, through which we are brought to the Father.

Those who enter the Order to become Lay Brothers or Third Order Regulars (male or female), receive a formation suited to their calling. Those whose calling is to serve the Church as priests and educators receive a formation that is suited to prepare them to exercise the priestly ministry in all its aspects.

Following a one year canonical novitiate (“Canonical” meaning as required by Church law) wherein the candidate learns the Rule and customs of the Franciscan Order by living them, he is permitted to make temporary vows for three years if he is found worthy.

During this time, the cleric - the Friar destined for the priesthood - spends a good portion of his time in study. The religious brother or sister spends time in prayer, spiritual reading, and various works for the good of the Order and the Church. The day is balanced out so that time is used well and yet so that no activity is more important than the spirit of prayer, to which all other things must be subservient.

For the aspirant priest: after the completion of what amounts to a three-year course of Philosophy, the candidate embarks on a four-year course of Theology. The basic subjects treated in Theology follow the traditional program in Roman Catholic Seminaries as established by the Code of Canon Law and other documents of the Apostolic See.

Among the four marks of the Church as found in the New Testament is that of Apostolicity. The true Church instituted by God in Adam and continuing through the Old Testament into the fulfillment of the promises in the New Testament of Jesus Christ must have four marks.

If anyone of these marks is lacking, it is certain that such a Church is not of Christ and in Christ.

FOUR MARKS.

The first mark of the true Church is that it is ONE. She has the same faith, the same Sacraments and the same head: Jesus Christ and His Vicar on earth: a legitimate Pope.

The second mark of the true Church is that it is HOLY. The Roman Catholic Church is holy because it teaches a holy doctrine and has saints whose holiness has

been sealed with miracles.

The third mark of the true Church is that it is CATHOLIC. This means that this Church had to exist from the time of Christ and be the same all over the world.

The fourth mark of the true Church is that it is APOSTOLIC. This true Church must be ruled by Popes and bishops who are the legitimate successors of the Apostles.

We, as Roman Catholics, are bound in conscience to the truths revealed by the Holy Ghost in Scripture and Tradition, as well as all that authentic popes have taught either through the Ordinary Magisterium or the Extraordinary Magisterium.

For example, as Roman Catholics whose faith is supernatural in nature and therefore can only be ascribed to the workings of the Holy Ghost in us, we cannot fail to see the contradiction in what the authoritative Magisterium represented in Pope Pius XII has clearly taught concerning the Church and what the Second Vatican Council and Conciliar popes have been teaching.

The Catholic conscience is bound forever to the doctrine of the Church as expressed by Pope Pius XII when he wrote: "If we would define and describe this

true Church of Jesus Christ - which is the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church - we shall find nothing more noble, more sublime, or more divine than the expression 'the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ' - an expression which springs from and is, as it were, the fair flowering of the repeated teaching of the Sacred Scriptures and the Holy Fathers."

This is in strong contrast to what Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger stated concerning the new wording defining the Church. Cardinal Ratzinger wrote: "Even the Second Vatican Council, and precisely this Council, says explicitly that 'the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him.' As is well known this word 'subsists' replaces the earlier 'is' (the one Church 'is' the Catholic Church) because even outside the Catholic Church there are many true Christians and much is truly Christian." (1988. Cardinal Ratzinger: Church, Ecumenism & Politics).

We cannot believe that once the Magisterium has defined and described the Church, that the "Roman Catholic Church continues in the effort to define itself in the light of the Second

Vatican Council.” There is no further need of defining anew that which has been doctrinally defined. We have only to respectfully accept the teaching of the Church and enrich our spiritual lives with the developing realization of the consequences of the defined truth.

This is a time of total dedication to God and His Church. The Franciscan vocation is a call to that complete dedication of oneself to Jesus Christ.

Above all, young men and women must remember this fundamental truth when they are tempted to think they are unable to follow Christ. Jesus chooses YOU; you do not choose HIM! You need only strive to make yourself worthy of the choice, confident that through Him, with Him, and in Him, you will be able to achieve the high purpose for which HE HAS CALLED YOU.

HOW DOES ONE KNOW IF HE HAS A VOCATION?

Very often, the individual is not aware that he has a vocation. The reason is that there is just a vague, general desire in that direction. No one is a judge in his own case. God has provided a visible authority to represent Him. If that authority strives to faithfully exercise that duty, one

can be morally certain that God will make His will known in a progressively clear manner.

God’s grace stirs individuals to seek what is higher. These graces are not constant and if not acted upon, may grow faint with time. Rejection of God’s grace will never be a matter of free choice. Free choice is a lie. We are not free to turn our back upon God. We can only accept His will and reap the happy reward promised to us; or, we can face Him on judgment day to answer for rejecting Him. In each case, we will either be punished or rewarded. This is our only “choice”.

If you feel the motion of God’s grace expressed in a desire to serve God and reach something higher and nobler, do not hesitate. That is the acceptable hour. Have the courage to give yourself to God. He will not be wanting in repaying your generosity. But, if you don’t even try to know if Jesus is calling you, how do you hope to live in this life and escape His rebuking glance in the next? If you wish to enter the Franciscan Order to become a Sister, Brother or Priest, and have the necessary qualifications, write or call us here at THE SERAPH, or speak to one of our fellow religious and priests.

St. Francis' Spiritual Revolution

Brother Anthony Lentz, O.F.M.

Part Two

(continued)

There are three main remedies which are applicable to all in combating the concupiscence of the flesh. They are fasting, custody of the eyes, and controlling the imagination.

When it comes to fasting you do not have to eat so little that you make yourself weak and sickly. The central point of fasting is denying yourself of something that you like. Instead of eating only foods that are pleasing to the palate, put on the table things that are less appealing to you. This first point is closely followed by another, that is not eating until you are full. This does not mean to imply that everyone who eats until they are satisfied is guilty of gluttony, for every person's needs are different depending on their health and physical disposition. The thing to understand is when a person's belly is full his defenses are lowered and the danger of falling into sin is more immediate.

Custody of the eyes is simply controlling one's curiosity, especially when one's purity is in danger. St. Francis practiced this so perfectly in his dealings with

women that he would barely even look at them. In fact, he said that there were only two women that he would recognize by looking at them. A person does not have to wait until a temptation presents itself to start practicing control, this can be done in a safer environment. For an example, let's say that you are walking through a department store and there is an interesting display which you catch out of the corner of your eye. Simply say to yourself that, "I do not have to look at it." This example can be applied to many types of situations such as sports scores, a friend's post on Facebook, traffic accidents, etc. This practice also has an added benefit of helping to control those stirrings of curiosity which can lead to sins of the tongue.

There are two things which are helpful in controlling the imagination – focusing on what you are doing and not becoming discouraged when a sinful thought simply will not leave you alone. Dissipation of the mind (day-dreaming) is an obstacle which greatly hinders spiritual progress. The reasons are because they are self-centered and leave very little room for mediating upon spiritual matters. Remember, as St. Francis

said, that laboring honestly helps to banish idleness. So, adopt the Christian work ethic by making a point of focusing on the task which duty demands of you and look to do it well. This will help greatly in keeping unwanted thoughts from entering your mind. Unfortunately, sometimes they do come into your mind and must be dealt with. The first thing you need to remember is not to become too worked up over it because the more attention you give the temptation, the stronger it will become. Staying calm is very important. Another Francis, St. Francis de Sales, gives us some timely advice: “Do not mistake the rustling of leaves, for the clanging of storms.” In other words, do not make mountains out of molehills.

The Pride of Life

The “pride of life” is vanity; it is the gross over-estimation of oneself. It is the pitting of our will against the Divine Will, pushed along with the foolish notion that we can overcome It. Could there be any greater illusion? It is an act of spiritual insanity. Whenever we sin, we are re-echoing the battle cry of the fallen angels – “*Non serviam* – I will not serve.” We are creatures of an all-holy and all-good God; it is our duty, or rather, it is our honor to serve Him. We are given the greatest of examples from Our Lord when in

the Garden of Gethsemane, on the night before His bitter Passion, He prayed to His Father, “Not as I will but as Thou wilt.” To serve God is to recognize His supreme sovereignty over all creation. In the simple nature of things, He is the master and we are the servants. It is only through His bounty and grace that by baptism we are made into His adopted children and heirs to the kingdom of Heaven. We have done nothing to deserve such a grace, for there is nothing that we possess which we have not received from Him. St. Francis expresses this truth in such a simple and humble manner, “We must be firmly convinced that we have nothing of our own, except our vices and sins.” (The Rule of 1221) All that is good comes from the Providence of God, and all that is evil comes from the abuse of our free will. To truly understand this, and live it, is to practice true humility. Humility is, as Our Seraphic Father says, the recognition of the truth about God and oneself.

All true authority on earth comes from God; it is He Who delegates it so that order may be maintained in society. The humble truth is that we are not all equal, for there will always be leaders and followers. And we are bound to honor and obey those who are placed above us – whether it be the child to the

parent, the student to the teacher, the employee to the boss, or the citizen to a government official. Since man is not perfect and liable to fall into sin and error, there is a time when we must not obey. In his *Letter to all the Faithful* St. Francis explains what the true Christian attitude should be, “We ought also to deny ourselves and to put our bodies beneath the yoke of servitude and holy obedience as each one has promised to the Lord. And let no man be bound by obedience to anyone in that where sin or offense is committed.” This is what we have learned in our catechism as children – be obedient in all things except sin!

Since all Catholics should strive for spiritual perfection, they should also strive to obtain a perfect obedience. What is perfect obedience? St. Francis explains it this way: “Take a corpse and place it wherever you want. You will see that it doesn’t resist being moved, it doesn’t complain about its position, it doesn’t cry out if it is allowed to lie there. If it is placed on a chair, it won’t look up but down; if it is clothed in purple, it looks twice as pale. This is true obedience: not to ask why you are moved, not to care where you are placed, not to insist on being changed somewhere else. Raised to an office, you retain your accustomed humility; the

more you are honored, the more unworthy you consider yourself.” Here St. Francis gives us the practical application of obedience, which extends not merely to friars but to all who wish to follow Christ.

It is noticed in society that persons usually want to give their opinions about everything. In the workplace, there are many examples of persons who refuse to do what they are told simply because they were not explained the reason “why” or because the boss didn’t ask nicely. This is childishness and pettiness in its grossest form, and should never be the attitude of a Catholic. It is a good practice to do what you are asked well and not to give your opinion unless you are asked to give it. Here you are saying to God, “not my will but Yours be done.” Of course, it should be pointed out that to ask your boss to explain what he wants to be done so you can do it well is not being insubordinate, it is being prudent. So don’t think that you are failing in practicing obedience if you need to do so. Finally, if you are asked to do something which is difficult or that which you do not care to do, just think about Christ crucified! The thought of the pains which He endured upon the Cross should be enough to make even to most difficult of tasks seem ‘light

and sweet.” Remember that we all have stains left over from sin which must be cleansed, and there is really no better way to do this than by denying our own will.

The Importance of Prayer

Before concluding this article, it is good to say something about the importance of prayer, for without it all the advice and information given in this article would be useless.

In chapter five of the *Rule of the Friars Minor* (the final draft of 1223) St. Francis wrote, “Those friars to whom the Lord has given the grace of working should labor faithfully and devoutly so that in banishing idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish **the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, to which all temporal things should be subservient.**”

There can be no spiritual life unless there is a prayer life. It is through prayer that we are able to reflect upon who God is and who exactly we are in comparison to Him. Prayer takes us out of the material world and places us into the spiritual; it allows us to examine our conduct towards God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Also in the most difficult of times prayer can be a source of consolation and spiritual strength. At the beginning of his conversion, St. Francis hid in a cave for fear of

his father’s rage and prayed that his persecutors would leave him in peace. God did answer his prayer, but probably not in the way that Francis originally intended. Instead of changing the hearts of his persecutors, God inspired in the soul of the young Francis a sense of shame for his lack of courage. Francis then reproached himself and faced his persecutors with unflinching bravery, and there he was, by the grace of God, a step further in reforming himself.

What we have gone over in this article is, mainly, general Catholic spirituality. Most of what St. Francis had said was also taught by other saints and theologians. St. Francis was not re-inventing the wheel; he was trying to get it rolling again. He wished to put into men’s minds and hearts a love for Christ crucified! St. Francis sought to suffer for Christ by “denying himself and taking up his cross.” He denied himself by sacrificing his wealth, his senses, and his free-will so much to the point that his life was a living martyrdom! These thoughts lead us to the subject which we will cover in the final article of this series. It is truly the most revolutionary ideal of St. Francis – his perfect joy.

Sister Agnes' Favorites

For the Eve of Communion Day

Jesus, Jesus come to me,
Oh, how much I long for Thee!
Come, Thou, of all friends the best,
Take possession of my breast.

Comfort my poor soul distressed,
Come and dwell within my breast;
Oh! How oft I sigh for Thee,
Jesus, Jesus come to me.

Empty is all worldly joy,
Ever mixed with some alloy;
Give me my true Sovereign Good,
Jesus Thy own Flesh and Blood.

Comfort my poor soul distressed,
Come and dwell within my breast;
Oh! How oft I sigh for Thee,
Jesus, Jesus come to me.

On the Cross three hours for me
Thou didst hang in agony;
I my heart to Thee resign;
Oh, what rapture to be Thine!

Comfort my poor soul distressed,
Come and dwell within my breast;
Oh! How oft I sigh for Thee,
Jesus, Jesus come to me.

Cultural Communism

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

For many, to speak of going to war with the Communists implies a battle where lives are lost and numberless others are injured. Homes are destroyed, nations are brought to their knees or simply cease to exist. The greatest fear of the world for seventy years was a nuclear war where billions would be killed and the world as we know it would be altered for centuries to come.

The Communists were able through their military to invade and conquer many nations. They also knew, though, they would not be able to invade and militarily conquer the United States. The plan, therefore, was to infiltrate the government and society as a whole. The Communists would use their agents to undermine the government and its laws and through means of stealth undermine the patriotism and loyalty of its citizens.

It is an unfortunate fact as we witnessed in recent years that the Communists have been quite successful. Patriotism and the love of the God-given rights we have been able to possess in this country has waned in such a manner that many hate this country and now advocate for Socialism or Communism.

How has this been possible since at

one time the nation seemed to be so united against Communism? The answer is both simple and complex at the same time.

The simple answer seems to be that in the best of nations you will always have traitors. People will betray their native land for various reasons. Perhaps they lost a loved one in a previous war, or they have been bribed with women, money or power. Some simply have been at odds with the principles upon which this country was founded.

It did not take long before Communists infiltrated the federal government. Numerous traitors were discovered before 1960. Hollywood was promoting Communism in their movies and television programs prior to World War II and certainly in the 1950's and 60's. Catholics were some of those who believed the lies of these godless totalitarianists.

There are Catholics today who know little or nothing of the infiltration of Communist agents who became “priests” to undermine and destroy the Church. No one knows how many agents infiltrated the Church, but through the testimony of former agents, it is known to be in the thousands. May one consider it was through these agents that Vatican II

was called and used to overthrow the Church?

The Communists certainly used the non-violent methods to their advantage. The previously mentioned methods are those which are known, if only then by a small number of people. There have been other methods which have, and still are, not known as well to the common mass of society. Perhaps the least recognized methods are those which have been slowly placed into the educational systems.

The Communists used the public school systems at first to indoctrinate children of all ages. It is a known fact that the NEA (National Education Association) began to incorporate Communism/Socialism in their curriculum in the 1960's. Their efforts which continue today have been quite successful in undermining love of this country and promoting Socialism and Communism. At least in part, they have done this by teaching that Communism is just another form of government, as though there were no real dangers to the ordinary citizen.

It did not take long for Communism to take hold on the college campuses. The violent anti-war riots and protests which took place during the Vietnam War were clear signals to the patriots of the time.

Once the Modernists took over

the Catholic school systems, a similar program was carried out to indoctrinate the naïve and unsuspecting schoolchildren. Now you know why there has been such an anti-patriotic mentality among so many college-age students on the so-called Catholic campuses for many years. These schools have been attacked simultaneously from two fronts for many years. The Modernists have sought to destroy the faith of these young adults while the Communists on campus undermined their love of country. It has been no mere accident that college campuses have been the cultural incubators for this country for over fifty years.

There is a parallel example of this quiet cultural war in the Catholic Church. It is the documented statements of Bella Dodd before the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee of the Committee on Un-American Activities November 16, 1953. She testified under oath of the Stalinist plan to recruit young Communist men for the purpose of infiltrating the Catholic Church. She stated that she was responsible for recruiting 1,100 men into the Church. She also stated that these men would teach the Faith as priests but once they were Monsignors or bishops they would then begin to compromise and deny the Faith, thus undermining the faith of the laity. In other words, there was a quiet revolution taking place well

before Vatican II. Once this false council was convened, the traitors in the Church would then create a situation through their ambiguous and misleading documents to bring about a spiritual revolution, unlike anything the Church has previously experienced. Catholics do not usually think of it in these terms but the spiritual revolution of the Modernists brought about an entirely different culture, one which is not Catholic but quite anti-Catholic.

In more recent years, political correctness has influenced society, unlike anything one has seen before. Political correctness is nothing less than disguised thought control. When the average person is not willing to do that which is correct due to the opinions of others and perhaps most of society, there is an essential problem occurring among men. This problem goes well beyond simple human respect and works to control the unthinking masses down the road to giving up their right to speak openly and freely. The mind manipulators, indeed, wish to squash the patriotic and free person wherever they may live. Most importantly, souls are lost because of bad decisions.

Among Catholics, led by the treasonous hierarchy, there is little tolerance for true doctrine and Tradition. Yes, there has been political correctness within the Modernist Church. This is but one of

the methods used by the Modernists (clerical Communists), but a very effective one indeed.

In 2018, there is a growing desire among college-age students (no surprise here) to live under Communism/Socialism, thinking this is better than the system of government which currently exists in the United States. For those who are old enough to remember, this is a frightening flashback to the campus riots of the 1960's. Please note that violent revolution has been a part of both. These naïve and misguided youth believe they are the "great idealists" but the fact is, there is nothing logical or reasonable about Communism, and, therefore, ideal. The Communists of the Leninist era and those of today have, among other things, one thing in common. They must create a false hope in the hearts and minds of its blind followers.

It is a sad indictment of mankind that so many people in various parts of the world have fallen for the lies of those who would take away all basic human rights from the individual and strip them of the freedom of publicly adoring the One True God in the One True Religion and call it paradise.

The only place one is able to find a true culture as so ordained by God is within the Roman Catholic Church. All else is an erroneous dream filled with false hope.

A Chance to Live

Monsignor John P. Carroll-Abbing

IV

THE LOST CHILDREN OF THE WAR

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

(Continued)

While waiting he ate, he rested at last. No more work. Summer came and even on the Alps the cold was gone. Life had improved a lot.

The trip on the jeep is a great adventure. The thought of Rome, a home, and an aunt who will surely take good care of him, makes him laugh and joke. The soldiers also are good to him.

“And what will you do there?”

“Work, I guess — I’m used to it you know . . . but I’ll make money now . . . and I’ll pay for my keep. . . .” But in Rome no one knew of his aunt.

“Go to the Vatican. There’s an information office, where you’ll find out what you want.”

No luck there either. He had just left its doors when I met him.

As he finished his story, I noticed that my chauffeur had opened

the door of the car, reasonably certain that he would have another passenger.

The lad stayed with me several days, until I succeeded in finding a home for him. He spent most of the time in my office, his hands on my desk and his chin resting on his hands. Sometimes he followed with interest everything that I was doing. Suddenly a faraway look would come into his eyes and he would be a thousand miles distant. The lost look had gone, but I seemed to catch both a longing and a wish for something of his own — a home, a mother, a father, only a little of what any human heart desires.

This was one case. Like it there were a host of others, some even worse. By mere chance this lad had not had time to come in contact with the worst evil of the street.

But, as I have said before, although condemned and vilified, the children were not delinquents. Abandoned by men, they were not abandoned by the Almighty and, under the influence of His Grace, they taught us more than one lesson and furnished us with examples of charity and brotherly love, unique and memorable in an

era of so much horror.

Sandro was an orphan, his parents buried under the ruins of Cassino. He lived in Rome with his small friends and sold cigarettes, shined shoes for the Allied soldiers under the porticoes of the Piazza Esedra. He got along, and at night, after he had eaten, he even had some money left over. Most of this soon went to the youngsters less fortunate or less able than himself.

One unlucky day he was run over by a jeep racing through one of the streets. He was taken to the hospital by a passer-by. It was necessary to amputate one of his feet, crushed under the wheels.

He had to stay in the hospital for two long months, but he was practically never alone. His friends took turns in visiting him and one of them at least was always at his bedside keeping him company. Many a time the night nurse, coming on duty, would find a ragged *sciussia* fast asleep by the bedside and would have to shake him firmly before he would be sufficiently awake to realize that it was time to leave. And his friends never came empty-handed. They brought him chocolate bars, chewing gum, hard candy, a piece of white bread, a pair of new trousers for the day when he would rejoin them.

The day he was dismissed, five of his small companions were waiting

for him on the sidewalk in front of the hospital door. They looked sheepishly at the empty trouser leg and at the awkward crutch under his arm.

Sandro made a crude attempt at a joke. It sufficed, however. They all laughed and made a great show of helping him along to the hovel where they had found a bed for him.

It was only a cot in the corner of a filthy room, but it was better than nothing. Every day one of them came to accompany him toward the station. If it was not raining, Sandro would pass the whole day in the open lying next to Michael's shoeshine box near the entrance to the Grand Hotel. Michael became proud of him. Sandro was a distinct asset to his business. If one of the customers, moved by pity, asked for Sandro's story, it had by now been elaborated into an exciting account guaranteed to move anyone to tears. Sandro, also at the end of the day, felt he had earned the money Michael gave him.

Ever since his accident, Sandro had been thinking of an older brother that he had not seen for many months, but whom he knew was somewhere in Rome. Word went around among his friends and after a few weeks of intense search, they discovered him and brought him to Sandro's room as a surprise, one rainy afternoon.

That was a gay day in spite of gray clouds. What a feast they had! Canned meat, orange marmalade, and even a bottle of the worst possible wine!

The adults who shunned them like the plague could have learned many a lesson from these shoeshine boys. But instead, they ran from them, hurried past them on the street, as though the very sight of them was a humiliating reminder of their incapacity to help, or ignored them completely, accepting them unreflectingly as one of the strange phenomena in which they could not possibly have any personal interest.

Some writers depicted in the lives of the *sciusia* only the side that humiliated the personality of the child and gave their impression that their occupation offered no other aspect than one of servile abjection. They did not understand or did not want to understand that many of these youngsters valued their work as an honest effort toward survival. A certain sense of pride upheld them, they refused to steal, they found in work their only means of keeping alive.

Beppe was one of these.

While playing in front of his home on July 10, 1943, he did not know the day would be a turning point in his life. Yes . . . the same thing . . . an air raid. Most of the people

in the street or within the houses escaped. At the first sound of the sirens they ran to the shelters.

Beppe was small. He just stood where he was, too scared to move. All that he could do was to throw himself on the ground and cover his ears with his hands.

When it was over and he dared to lift up his head to look at the place, it was a shambles. Frightened out of his wits, he disappeared somewhere. He had seen his house demolished, he was sure his mother and father were buried under the ruins.

All day he wandered around Rome. Late that night, a young woman found him weeping on a corner and took him home with her. He was happy for a few months and came to think of her as his own dear mother. A few months and the Germans came. They invaded the apartment building where he lived, rounded up some of the men hiding there and, by some strange confusion, took him with them and sent him off to Germany.

For two years he lived in the concentration camp. A priest there . . . also an inmate . . . took an interest in him, gave him lessons, and at the conclusion of the war saw to it that he was sent back as soon as possible to Italy. Rome! At last he was there again after long, weary journeys in cattle cars, after continuous changes from one

house to another, from one camp to a worse one, after undergoing hunger, thirst, almost unbearable cold, after listening to the crack of bombs falling around him, the shrieks of sirens, the roar of tanks advancing across defeated Germany.

He had seen whole populations evacuated, thousands of dead on battlefields and city streets, but through all those months of torment, one idea had stayed fixed in his mind: to find once again that peaceful corner he had been forced to leave, for no understandable reason that he could see, the humble home of his benefactress.

As soon as he reached Rome, he went to the family address and waited, sitting on the dark stone staircase, until she came back from her work, fumbling in her bag for her key. She was overjoyed to see him and fussed over him while he washed and dressed.

He was older now and not only in years. He soon realized that his foster mother was not rolling in wealth. He must find a job and help to keep the home. He began to go from one shop to another in the neighborhood looking for work. So one day *Sfilatino* (the name given to the long thin loaves of Italian bread) came into being. It was the name they gave him at the bar and grill where he had found a job. “You have to have an identity

card,” someone told him. He reported to the office where he had been sent. “Name . . . first . . . last . . . father . . . mother . . . ?” The clerk searches through the card index, comes back with the address.

“Why did you say your father and mother were dead?”

Here I find them registered in the refugee camp in Viale del Re.”

“But my family was killed . . . I saw a bomb fall on the house. . . .”

“Not according to the information in these books . . . next . . .”

Sfilatino returns to the shop where he works and wonders what to do. He hesitates about going to the camp for fear of too great a disappointment. He is sure that his parents are dead.

Finally an idea strikes him. He writes his mother and addresses it.

“Is it true that you are alive, Mother? I found it out today. I am at Gallo’s *rosticceria*.”

The next day the letter is delivered. Twenty minutes later mother and son are together again.

“Beppe . . . Beppe . . . you are alive. . . .”

Before the owner of the *rosticceria* and the waiters looking on with unbelieving eyes, the two cling to each other.

In the fall I petitioned His

Holiness, Pope Pius XII, to grant an audience to the homeless boys who frequented the many shelters scattered around the city. The Holy Father who among his many activities had always kept in his heart a very special corner for the stricken children of the war, consented immediately.

October 28, 1945, was “Sciuscià Day” at the Vatican. A famous date this, for in previous years, it had seen martial parades, columns of marching men, row upon row of cannon. By a strange coincidence on that same day, the year that had seen the so-called ending of World War II, a group of small war victims, ragged and unkempt, met in audience before His Holiness.

How many? It was impossible for us to count them. By previous arrangement about two thousand were taken to the Vatican by trolley cars. An innumerable number, however, came and kept coming.

In the Great Square of St. Peter, the crowd of youngsters grew to enormous proportions. They were finally channeled up the impressive staircase that leads to the doors of the major temple of Christendom.

Wide-awake, gay, noisy, they chatter and even shout. They are barefooted, poorly dressed, but neat and clean. That morning a good scrubbing had been the order of the day. No dirty hands, ragged

and torn though their clothes might have been.

Once inside the doors, they start running, racing, anxious to find a place in front of the altar where I am to say Mass for them.

They quiet down as I begin, then their young voices rise to the ceiling of the majestic basilica, while they join together to sing the hymns. Many hundreds of them receive Communion.

I see them there in front of me, as I turn toward them during Mass. Here they are, thousands of small wanderers, in St. Peter’s, kneeling in front of an altar. Here are the ragamuffins, the flotsam, the scorned, ridiculed street urchins. These are the beloved little ones of Christ, here they are praying to Him. A part of their joy communicates itself to me and I turn back to the altar shaken and moved.

Mass is over. All of us head for the main staircase leading to the audience chambers. At sight of the Swiss Guards, with their breastplates and casques and halberds, the young visitors are entranced and the Guards find it hard to look impassive under the flood of street-boy comments.

The bronze doors, the gold, the tapestries, the splendor of statues and paintings hold their wide-eyed interest. There is so much to see

that the bare feet do not even feel the cold of the marble floors.

“We’ll see him . . . the Pope . . . just like the big shots . . . kings, generals, presidents. . . .”

It is the feast day of the *sciuscia*. He is somebody, living, is worth while.

The crowd of children files into the huge Hall of Benediction. His Holiness has wanted to give to this meeting all the dignity and honor of a great audience.

There is a moment of tension, of self-controlled expectation. Small heads, brown and blond and red, curly, smooth, ruffled, are all turned toward a single door, the door through which they know the Pope will come to them.

At his entrance their enthusiasm breaks loose. There is no holding them back. They shout their greetings, they wiggle up the great columns, they balance perilously on the wooden barricade, they stand on the windows, hands outstretched toward the great chair.

“Long live the Pope!”

There is no restraint, no self-consciousness in the cry. It rises spontaneous to their lips. The strangest salutations ever heard come out unrestrained from a thousand throats. The scene is an unforgettable one. The Pope is as happy as the children. The kindness

of his smile has never been so radiant, as he bends to caress the tousled heads. The children know instinctively they are the favorites in his great flock. “The most dearly beloved,” as he himself had said to me a few days before. Poor and tattered as they are, small lost sheep, before him they feel they are as good as anyone else, equals in the sight of God.

At the uplifted hand of the Holy Father, the crowd is quickly quiet.

In the silence, I hear a small *sciuscia* deliver an address, the words at times hardly distinguishable.

The hymn to the Pope, their hymn, rings out from hundreds of throats, maybe a little out of tune, but sung with no reserve of the amount of sound they can produce.

Where could I ever have hoped to assist at such a scene, so charged with feeling and purity of sentiment? For a few moments I speak to the Holy Father and he hands me a very large sum of money for my work.

Silence once again and then the Pope speaks, gives them his blessing, and is gone. But his words will be remembered long through the years:

“Beloved children, we read in your eyes at this moment the joy you feel as you gather here around us. May you read in our own eyes, also, the

happiness we feel in greeting you and our gratitude in accepting your gifts, the gift of your prayers and of your hearts that want to be pure and generous.

“Many of you are very small, and all of you are still young, even the oldest. And yet you have experienced life, you have known much misery, great sadness. A few of you may not have had the joy of being born and growing up within the bosom of a God-fearing family. You may not have heard of religion, of priest, of Pope, except to hear them ridiculed and worse. Without knowing it, you may have become accustomed to thinking and speaking in the same way.

“If anyone had ever pointed out the walls of the Vatican to you and told you that some day you would enter there, that we would have been happy to have you here, that you would have been greeted, as by a kind Father who loves you deeply, and that you would have felt at home close to him, full of trust and affection, a few months ago, even, you might not have believed it possible.”

The Pope continues. He speaks of the mysteries of faith, of the Babe of Bethlehem born in a stable, as poor as they, of His death on the cross to save them, of the Mother of Christ, the loveliest, the best of all mothers, their mother also, of the mercy and love of an infinite

God, ever ready to forgive the small or the big prodigal returning to His Father’s house.

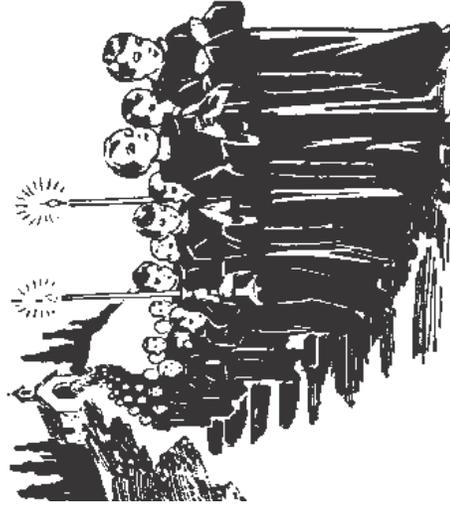
“Dearly beloved children,” he concludes, “we must leave you now, but our hearts will follow you wherever you are, our prayers will ever be with you, while with deep affection, we impart to you and to those men and women whose kindness hovers over you, whose minds and hearts guide you, Our Apostolic and Fatherly Benediction.”

On St. Peter’s Square thousands of happy youngsters give vent to their feelings with shouts and songs and laughter and munch away at the lunches prepared for them by the Holy Father’s instructions and handed to them as they poured out of the audience hall.

Many of them still linger on the stairs to take a last look at the Swiss Guards and a minor revolution breaks out with first one then scores of inflated paper luncheon bags.

Thus on a gay note is concluded the great audience, and the Guards, who, alarmed at the inexplicable noise, have hurried to the top of the staircase, smile benignly at this show of youthful festivity.

To be continued.



Franciscan Saints

MARCH 24

THE SERVANT OF GOD
MARY EMMANUELA

Widow, Second Order

Mary Emmanuela was a Spanish princess, descended from the famous dukes of Medina-Sidonia. Her noble rank, the wealth of her family, and her exceptional beauty caused her to give herself up entirely to the world and its vanities. From the fact that she remained childless in the married state, she took further occasion to seek consolation in dissipating diversions and sinful gratifications.

But the mercy of God caused a fortunate misfortune to tear her away from the abyss to which she was hastening. With another duchess, she was crossing a bridge when the beams suddenly gave way and the bridge fell into the river; both women were hurled into the water. But Emmanuela remained suspended by her clothes from a beam that still stood in place. In this dangerous predicament, she made a vow that if she were saved, she would change her life and build a

Franciscan convent. She was saved and brought to shore unharmed.

At once, she began the erection of the Franciscan convent and church at Seville, and when her husband died, she entered the monastery of Poor Clares in that city. There she was an object of edification to all the sisters on account of her zeal for penance, her humility, and her unceasing prayer for the divine mercy. Her desire to make satisfaction for her sins urged her, towards the close of her life, to transfer to a Poor Clare community of stricter observance. There she died in the year 1543 in the odor of sanctity. When her grave was opened forty years later, her body was found wholly incorrupt.

ON THE BLESSINGS OF MISFORTUNE

1. Consider that the mishap which Emmanuela met with on

the bridge might seem the worst sort of misfortune if viewed in a human sense; in reality, however, it was the greatest fortune, the means to preserve her from eternal damnation. It often happens that temporal misfortune makes for a person's eternal welfare. The loss of temporal goods, sickness and misery, also slander and contempt even from our friends, help us to recognize the truth, the real nothingness of everything earthly. It helps us to enter into ourselves and to turn our hearts and our efforts to the one supreme and true Good. Sacred history is filled with examples of the sort. Was it not a great misfortune for the prodigal son that he was completely forsaken and indigent? He then entered into himself and returned to his father. — How much of such blessed misfortune there is! Consult your own experience.

2. Consider that it can likewise be said there is much unfortunate luck in the world. What everyone praises as great good fortune is often very real misfortune. Our servant of God descended from a very renowned family, was very rich and very attractive. Who would not have considered her very fortunate on that account? And yet, this temporal good fortune was an occasion that she reached so pitiable a state of soul, that later on she could never bewail

it sufficiently. O deceptive fortune of the children of men! How often it is a snare which our enemy lays to destroy us in time and in eternity! Ought a Christian really ever desire such good fortune?

3. Consider that, accordingly, we should look upon the toward and the untoward in an entirely different light than that with which worldly people look upon them. We can serve God as well in sorrow and in poverty and be happy withal, as in wealth and prosperity; that is plain from the life of Job. Today everyone of us would rather change with poor Lazarus than with luxurious Dives. We do not know what is most conducive to our true good fortune. Hence, we should let God rule over us, be grateful to Him for the pleasant things of life and be resigned in unpleasant circumstances, ever striving for one thing only — to belong to Him. “To them that love God, all things work together unto good” (Rom. 8:28).

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(Third Prayer on
Ember Saturday in Lent)

Give ear to our prayers, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that through Thy grace, we may both deserve to be humble in prosperity and safe in adversity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

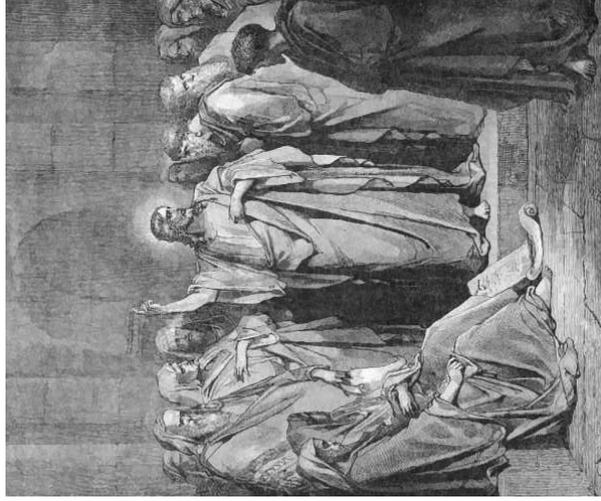
OR,

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

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

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

1834.



CONSIDERATION XX.

THE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM OUR CROSSES AND AFFLICTIONS.

We entertain, most commonly, very false and erroneous notions respecting the nature of crosses and afflictions. We consider them as misfortunes; and the sufferer we look upon as an unfortunate being, who deserves our pity. Now, all this in the Christian is inconsistent. It is forgetting that the cross is the very basis of our divine religion; and that its sacred Founder has pronounced those “*happy, who MOURN.*” The truth, therefore,

is — that although crosses and sufferings may be subjects for “mourning” — yet, when borne, as in the designs of Providence they should be — with patience and in the spirit of piety — they are then blessings — often the greatest blessings which the mercy of God can send us. Such as these are even the dictates, not merely of religion, but of reason itself. For, as a pagan writer remarks, “*Adversity is the trial of Glory.*” Whence, he continues to observe; — “*All great men have rejoiced to suffer because it gave them the opportunity of showing their greatness of soul.*”

I. It is, no doubt, a very evident maxim that whatsoever is

calculated to wean us from an undue attachment to the world; — to improve our morals; or to correct our vices; — whatsoever is formed to lead us on to virtue and to promote our eternal happiness — that, of course, should be considered by the Christian not as a misfortune, but a benefit. Now, it is true that if anything be adapted to produce these effects, it is most certainly the circumstance of sufferings and crosses; — precisely as on the contrary, if anything be calculated to corrupt the heart, to foment the passions, and to endanger our salvation it is the influence of worldly prosperity, — of riches, pleasures, &c. When the world smiles always upon us — such is the weakness of our nature — we love it too much. Its charms become too powerful, its enchantments too strong, for our self-love to resist. Hence, therefore, it is really the effect of God's mercy that He permits some accident or other to come to destroy the dangerous delusion; to disturb our false security, and to break our chains asunder. It is a proof of His love for us, that He suffers us not to fall asleep in this land of exile, — upon the banks of the streams of Babylon. And, accordingly, it is by these *very means* — by

the happy effects of crosses — that the goodness of God has incessantly brought, and every day brings, worldlings, hitherto lost in dissipation; and sinners, sunk deep in their disorders — to a sense of their alarming situation — thus conducting them back to the paths of piety, and religion.

It was so, for example, with yonder modest and humble individual. He was lately enchanted with the pleasures of the world; elate with its distinctions; and proud of his riches and magnificence. An unexpected, and untoward, accident came suddenly to embitter his satisfactions; to cross his ambition, and defeat his projects. It opened his eyes. He saw the emptiness, and vanity, of earthly things: and his affections, are now placed in those only, which are substantial. He is now the virtuous Christian; happier far in his present moderation than he was in his former splendor.

We see, in like manner, that cheerful, amiable female. She was once the ornament and admiration, of every circle. Her beauty rendered her the gaze of the dissipated and the gay. Vain of the flattering distinction, she never suffered the very dream of a conversion to enter into

her mind. However, ere long, an unlooked-for change took place. It effaced much of her beauty and induced her to shrink from those scenes where her former worshippers had been used to offer their incense to her. Wherefore, now neglected, she began to enter seriously into herself; considered the folly of her past illusions; and turned her heart to God. She is now the mild, modest and humble vestal, as before, she was the haughty and dissipated worldling.

It is so, too, with that kind, gentle and respectable young man. He was, a few years past, remarkable for his extravagance and disorders — the very center of each circle of dissipation. There was no feeling so remote from his mind, as the feeling of salvation. A serious illness came to interrupt his career. It gave him time to reflect; to view the danger of his situation; and to contemplate the gulf that yawned beneath him. He shuddered at the prospect. Grace came into second the happy sentiment and to complete the work of his reconciliation with his God. From a profligate debauchee, he is now the virtuous man — meek and gentle as he was before insolent; — pious, as he was once profane;

and — as the general effect of virtue — respected and beloved, where, lately, he was the object of ridicule and contempt.

Thus, then, it is that we may trace the salutary effects of sufferings. For, in all the foregoing instances, if these had not interfered the voice of grace would, in all probability, have been heard in vain; and the unfortunate victims of their passions might have carried with them their disorders and vices to the grave. So that, thus considered, our crosses at which we are apt to repine so much are sometimes, in reality, the greatest benefits which God in His mercy can confer upon us. And above all, this is true, in relation to the rich who, often, immersed in luxurious indolence would without such visitations, too easily forget their God and lose sight of their future destiny. Oh, what multitudes are there not of these, who have to thank heaven for these inflictions! It was these that first came to correct their errors; to reform their judgments, and to inspire salutary thoughts. It was then — under their pressure — that they had recourse to prayer; that they silently appealed to heaven; and that the appeal gave comfort, and consolation to the heart;

— thus strikingly proving, how much religion is interwoven in our nature; and conducive to our happiness.

II. After the benefit of weaning us from the vanities, ties and dissipations of the world, another advantage of sufferings is that they are the instruments, by which, when we bear them in the spirit of religion, we both obtain with greater facility the pardon of our sins and ensure the mitigation of our future punishments. Such is the assurance of the Holy Ghost.

“*In the time of tribulation,*” he tells us, “*God remitteth sin.*” We know, indeed; and every day repeat it: — Our sins, in the order of justice, deserve and loudly call for punishment. Punished they must be, either in this world or in the next; — in this world; by our patient suffering, as penitents; — or in the next, by our torments as reprobates. Between the two there exists no medium. Wherefore, is it not a consolation to think that by means of a few passing trials here — provided only that we sanctify them by our piety — we may escape all the horrors of a miserable eternity? And is it not an astonishing effect of God’s mercy towards

us, that He is willing to accept the trifling tribute of our patience and resignation in exchange for those evils, which by our sins we had prepared for ourselves hereafter? Such as these, it is certain, would be our sentiments did we only consider seriously, either the future punishments of sin or the weight and multitude of our own offenses.

If, then, we are unable to reconcile ourselves to our respective crosses by the consideration that it is God who sends them, and sends them moreover for our good (for this is the best and the most Christian motive to excite our patience) — if this consideration be not sufficient to reconcile us — let us then, when tempted to murmur or repine — only place before our imaginations the sufferings of the life to come; and compare these with the subjects of our present uneasiness or griefs. So, for example, if *pain or illness* be our portion, let us think on the pains and tortures, of the damned — plunged deep in fires, which ages will not extinguish; and fast chained to beds of iron which no kind hand will ever approach to smooth; — if *poverty* — let us reflect on the distresses of those miserable beings — condemned

to pine under every possible form of wretchedness, and shut out from every ray of relief, help or even hope: — if *grief*, and *sorrow*, — *let* us, in like manner, think of their deplorable situation — their never-ceasing tears; their endless groans; their everlasting despair — without one single beam of comfort to cheer the frightful gloom. — Considering these scenes attentively and comparing with them our present condition — be this ever so lamentable, and severe — we shall even think it a state of downright happiness; and so far from complaining or murmuring, under it, we shall rather, kiss the hand that strikes us and bless that severity, which is only this kindly cruel to us here, in order to spare and save us hereafter.

III. But, it is not to the wicked alone that trials and crosses are beneficial. They are so, likewise, to the virtuous and the just. They are to these the instruments and principles of increased piety, and perfection, — the crucibles in which the purity and brightness of their virtue, is rendered purer, and brighter still. In reality, they give occasion to the practice of almost every Christian virtue. They call forth the exercise

of patience, prayer, humility &c. They serve to enliven our faith; to animate our hope, and to infuse fresh ardor into our charity. They, moreover, protect and guard us against a multitude of dangers and temptations. Hence, that saying of St. Paul: “*Virtue is made perfect in weakness.*” It is under them that we are best enabled to manifest our courage and fidelity to God — thus fighting His battles and preparing for ourselves never-fading laurels. In fact, it was owing to their sufferings, more in general than to any other cause, that the saints became saints. It was thus, that the stroke of the hand of God, — as that of the skillful architect — prepared the most important stones of His heavenly building. The cross is the seal of the elect.

IV. There is, too, another consideration which — were there not even any other — should, of itself, convince us both of the utility and the necessity of sufferings. This is the example of our Divine Redeemer. In this, we have a rule which, in all the actions, and events of life we should strive to follow — a living law, which we are strictly bound to obey. It is, therefore, hence, that the Sacred

Scriptures incessantly inculcate and urgently press upon us the imitation of this sacred model. Whoever in fact, does not imitate it is not, properly speaking, the disciple of Christ: for, as St. Paul tells us: "**He, that has not the spirit of Christ, is not Christ's.**" And what, then, was the spirit — what the example of this great Master? Alas! we know this well. It was a spirit which fed on sufferings — a spirit, which, during the whole course of His career on earth, never once tasted aught that could gratify self-love or please inclination. He paced His painful journey through life, amidst hardships, and privations. Sufferings were His food, His exercise and His chief employment. Therefore, if the disciple should imitate His master; if the member should resemble the head; or if the copy should be something like the original — then also is the consequence plain, that it is our duty — not perhaps, to seek for sufferings — but at least, cheerfully to bear with those which Providence, in its wisdom, may think proper to impose upon us; — and not only this but to consider them, moreover, as the instruments and pledges, of our future happiness. The road to heaven — the "royal road," — is

the way of the cross. To rejoice on Thabor we should also weep on Calvary. To exult with Jesus hereafter, we should share a something in His sufferings here. It is upon these terms that we can best confidently hope for mercy and look forward to eternal joys.

Wherefore, let us consider well: and since such, and so many are the benefits of sufferings — since thus, both the Saint of Saints and His true disciples have all walked in the way of the cross — so let us, in our prudence, endeavor to follow generously in their footsteps. The cross may be heavy of itself: but grace and piety will make it light. The more severe our trials, — the more powerful also will be the graces to enable us to support them; and the greater, at the same time, the glory of having borne them. — It is the case with worldly pleasures that they begin with seeming satisfactions; but soon end in bitterness. Whereas, it is directly the reverse in regard to our afflictions: — they begin with something of bitterness, but end in comforts. Therefore, let us bear our respective sufferings in the spirit of religion, and we shall soon — very soon — reap the rewards, and joys, which follow them.

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