

# THE SERAPH

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**The Flight into Egypt**

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In essentia - Unitas. In dubio - Libertas.  
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# A New Year

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We begin a New Year with great hopes and expectations. The recollection of the past may bring forth memories of failings or heart aches, but with the grace of God we look forward to a brighter future. Each day we draw closer to eternity. The New Year acts as a marker in time; much as a mile marker on the highway marks off distances. We see how far we have come or how much closer we have drawn to our destination.

We must look back with clearer eyes than when we were first passing through. They say that hindsight is always 20/20. As we move forward we are never really sure of what lies ahead. There always seems to be some obstacle or impediment in the way of our goals. This necessitates that we must be flexible and adaptable to the changing situations. Many times in the surprise of the sudden changes that we did not expect we make faulty or bad decisions which we must later repent of or at least regret.

With hindsight we are already aware of the entire situation. We can look back with clarity of

vision and see where we thought we were going, we can see what got in our way; and we can see how we acted in each situation. We see what we did, and we understand what we could have done that might have made it better, or might have made it worse.

While looking back and “crying over spilt milk” appears unproductive and a waste of time; there is a need for us to reflect over the past. Every History student knows that those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. This is perhaps the greatest tragedy of all time. Men fail to learn from the past. How frustrating is it for every parent who tries to keep their children from making the same mistakes that they have made. Yet, it seems, every child demands the right to repeat the same mistakes of their parents and even to add more of their own to them. And once the mistake or error has been made, it cannot be undone. We may repent and make amends, but the act has still been done.

The New Year is truly a significant time for the

examination of our consciences. While we may never fully understand the true history of our ancestors, we do know our own history. As we examine our consciences we see our own history and the part we have played in the history of those around us. We can sometimes acknowledge the good that we have done (but always with the humble realization that this good was only made possible by the grace of God), but the other times we are forced to view the good that we have not done or the evil which we are guilty of. While the reflection upon these truths proves frequently to be very painful, it is nonetheless, necessary.

We review the past so that we may plan the future. Knowing what does not work either from the mistakes of others or from our own personal experience can save us a lot of time and effort. In scientific experimentation we understand that the understanding of what does not work is just as important as knowing what will work. Knowing what not to do saves us valuable time since we do not have to keep doing the same thing over and over; never achieving the desired goal. Every failure therefore, has a

positive aspect to it. The same is true in our own lives. If we have fallen, we should upon reflection be able to see not only the fall; but what led up to the fall, and what were the immediate and the remote causes of it.

If our mistake was a sin, we shall find the occasion that led to it. Once we know the occasion then it is a simple matter for us to look forward to avoiding that occasion forever into the future. If we avoid the occasion that led to the sin we will in effect avoid the sin itself. This is the reasoning that every rational being must employ if he is to advance in the spiritual life.

This January may we each look to our personal and collective pasts in the light of God's grace and 20/20 hindsight. We necessarily should do so with humility and wisdom so that from the past we can move forward in a positive direction. Having been on the detours, let us get back on the correct route so that we may reach our destination of Heaven as safely as possible. We do not know how many more of these New Year time markers will be ours, so let us make the best use of the one that we have now.

# The Holy Name of Jesus

5 January 2014

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We are called upon to place the Holy Name of Jesus at the beginning and end of all our works. This most powerful Name we are told in the *Canticle of Canticles* (1:2) is like oil poured out. Oil has some very wonderful properties. It gives light when burned; it is a fragrant food for the body; and it is a soothing medicine for wounds. The name of Jesus is all these things to those who truly believe.

Jesus is the light of the world. When we place His name before all our endeavors we see most clearly what we must do. Our studies are most fruitful when we begin and end them by calling upon the most Holy Name of Jesus. Our prayers all begin and end with the Sign of the Cross wherein we call upon the name of the Blessed Trinity. When our studies are encompassed with Jesus at the beginning and at the end, our minds are more brightly illuminated, and we understand much better. The great advances of civilization and mankind have been made principally by Catholics who have dedicated their lives and study to God. Putting the Holy Name of Jesus at the head of their works they

sought only the greater honor and glory of God. Their studies were made so that they might draw closer to God or bring men closer to God. It is for this reason that God so blessed them and made them capable of understanding in greater and greater detail this world and all that is in it. Everything that God has created is open for us to study, but they are all designed to draw us closer to God. We will only come to know and understand these things and the proper use that we are to make of them when we have God's grace lighting the way for us. God's grace only comes to us through the holy name of Jesus. There is no other name by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Oil is a flavorful food for our bodies. It makes our food more palatable, and provides us with necessary calories to keep our bodies going. The same is true for the Holy Name and our souls. Those who have tasted how sweet the Lord is, no longer find the things of this earth tolerable. (Psalm 33:9) Everything else becomes insipid once we have tasted the flavor of the oil of His Holy Name. Those who have tasted it long with ever increasing desire

to be united with God in Heaven. In this manner we see that the first and greatest commandment to love God above all things, ceases to be a commandment but rather becomes a pleasure and an ever burning desire to the point of necessity. Just as we do not need a commandment to feed our bodies, so those who have tasted how good God is, no longer need to be told to love Him, but seem to never get enough of Him. They begin to long with such a hunger that they desire to be dissolved in this life so that they can be forever one with Him in Heaven, as was Saint Paul. (Philippians 1:23)

Lastly we consider that the Holy Name of Jesus is like soothing and healing oil that is poured into our wounds. Oil is one of the finest medicinals for the body. It is readily available and calms and soothes the body so that healing may begin and continue. The same is true with our souls. There is no wound to the soul (however great it may be) that is not aided with the use of the name of Jesus. In every difficulty or danger the Holy Name is readily available to us; and the very mention of His name calms and soothes our souls. We witness this most profoundly in the sacraments, especially that of Penance. Those who approach the sacred tribunal filled with spiritual misery and pain, leave with hearts

that are uplifted with joy and happiness. They have heard the consoling words of Jesus as His representative, the priest, makes the sign of the cross over them: "I absolve you in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." All fear and trepidation, all anxiety, and depression vanish as the Holy Name is poured over their souls.

With the celebration of this feast day, we are drawn to the remembrance of all that God has done for us in His Holy Name. We have experienced often the light of God's grace; we have tasted how sweet He is; and we have felt the healing grace of His Name. We owe to God a great debt of gratitude for all these things. The best method of showing this gratitude is seek to increase these graces day by day. Our love for God's Holy Name must grow greater each and every day. This will best be accomplished if we develop the habit of putting His Name at the head of all we do, as well as at the end. In this manner we accomplish the admonition to do all things in God. We will see and understand better; we will feed our souls; and we will find the most powerful restorative for our souls. We will dissolve and become one with Jesus and say with St. Paul: "It is not I, but Jesus living within me." (Gal. 2:20)

# Introspection

Bishop Bonaventure Strandt, OFM

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To what purpose have we consecrated our energies in the past 12 months of our lives? How much closer have we drawn to our elected state of union with the Blessed Trinity? Or have we rather been drawn closer to the world and to complacency by those things that the saints refer to as the “allurements of sin”?

If Catholics would dedicate just one quarter of the energy they possess in focusing upon serious introspection, the Church would be filled with zealous warriors for truth. As tragic experience serves to remind us, it is more often the case that a great deal of energy is expended in trying to inquire into the lives of others. So many questions are wasted in the pursuit after knowledge. So many snares are set by demons bent upon the destruction of true Christian charity.

St. Paul speaks of charity as the **bond of perfection**. Do we truly wish to be numbered among the saints in heaven, reigning in eternal splendor with the Sovereign Good? Then, let us do as so many holy men and women before us have done: let us consider ourselves.

Is there any good reason to view ourselves in a light that is intentionally more flattering? Do we do ourselves any justice by refusing the gentle corrections of angels with their inspirations towards humility? Yes, we are so often accountable for hearing their voices, ever so faintly, and yet rejecting that grace.

A frightful number of graces are lost due to the vices of the tongue, and humility is the bane, or the very destruction of the sins we commit with our lips and hearts. The words of wisdom trickle down through the ages to confirm the truth: Silence is golden.

It is holy silence of which I am writing. Holy silence builds and edifies, and it never shows the slightest taint of irritability or ill temper. Holy silence built for the Mystical Body a marvelous temple with the supremely edifying silence of the ancient monastic communities of both Trappist and other Cistercian communities. We can even delve into the very beginning of monasticism for a solid encouragement in guarding our speech, from among those holiest of men known as the Desert

Fathers. As one Egyptian Father so succinctly instructed: “Many times have I regretted ever having spoken a word; but never have I regretted remaining silent.”

There are pieces and parts to every whole. The pieces and parts of the life that is truly pleasing in the sight of Almighty God is the constant practice of self-examination. This is essential in doing the one thing that holds so many souls back from attaining sainthood: **Forgiving those who have ever offended us, so that we may be forgiven. Unless we forgive our neighbor with all of our hearts, we can never be fully forgiven by the Lord, though we might sacramentally receive absolution many times.**

The key to our happiness in this life and in the next is love. Search the Epistles to find the vast amount of references that Saint Paul makes to demonstrate the unifying importance of love in the Mystical Body of Christ, The Catholic Church. He refers to several different communities of Catholics as “saints”, knowing their constant and genuinely outstanding charity. Why could a modern day Apostle not hope for the same?

Among the many resolutions that we make for self-improvement

in this upcoming calendar year, none could be more important or simpler to understand than remembering the words: “Ubi Caritas et Amor, Deus ibi est.”

**Where there is charity and love, there is God.** If the All Knowing God perceives in us souls marked with self-sacrificing love, we will attain the promised peace, the peace that Our Lord says can never be taken away from us. That is exactly why the Bishop offers his blessing throughout Holy Mass by saying: “Pax vobis”, instead of “Dominus vobiscum”. He is not only using his consecrated ministry to mediate the blessings of heaven upon the people; he is also reminding all present of that power confided to all true Apostles to grant the peace of the Lord to those who are of good will.

The words of St. Peter were often filled with the sweetness of knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; and no passage seems more pertinent to our imminent New Year than: “He who would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his heart from all evil. Let him seek after peace, and pursue it.” May we become worthy of obtaining the peace of Christ, which surpasses all human understanding.

# Franciscans and the Protestant Revolution In England

Francis Borgia Steck, O.F.M.

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## CHAPTER III

### FIRST RUMBLINGS OF THE STORM

*Henry seeks divorce from Catherine of Aragon — He repudiates her and marries Anne Boleyn — The Franciscans and the king's "secret affair" — Fr. William Peyto publicly rebukes the king and his court — Fr. John Elstow and Dr. Curwin — The two friars before the king — Banished.*

It was not political interest but mutual affection and esteem that had joined Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon in the bonds of wedlock. As years wore on, however, Henry's attitude toward his saintly queen underwent a sad change. Of the various causes that conspired to divert him from the path of duty, the principal one was the loose life at court. Some historians assert that it is doubtful whether he was ever a faithful husband. How far Henry in this respect shared the disgrace of other crowned heads of his time, it would be hard to determine. At all events, his frequent addresses to persons of indifferent morals were sufficient cause for alarm. The queen, no doubt, had her suspicions, but for obvious reasons remained silent; while Cardinal Wolsey, who could and

should have warned the heedless king, refrained from doing so on personal as well as on political grounds.<sup>1</sup> Hence, in 1527, when Henry's passion for Anne Boleyn, a lady in the Queen's household, had got the better of him, he openly urged the question of a divorce from Catherine, feigning scruples of conscience regarding the validity of the dispensation he had obtained from Rome to marry her. The case was eventually brought before the Roman court, and the Pope appointed a special commission to examine it. All during the lengthy and complicated proceedings of this commission, the king as well as his cringing partisans among the nobility and higher clergy knew fully well that Catherine was his lawful consort, and that his alleged fear of living in illegal wedlock with her was merely a cloak to hide the foulness of his heart.

This became clear when, seeing that the papal commission would ultimately declare against the projected divorce, he anticipated its

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**1** Harpsfield and two other contemporary chroniclers even assert that Wolsey and Longland, then confessor to Henry VIII, were the first to raise serious doubts in the king's mind regarding the validity of his marriage with Catherine of Aragon. See Bu Boys, *Catherine D'Aragon*, pp. 149 seq.

decision, repudiated Queen Catherine, and secretly married Anne Boleyn. The sacrilegious ceremony took place on January 25, 1533, in the private chapel of the royal palace at Whitehall.<sup>2</sup> It was performed by Rowland Lee, but only after the lying king had assured the chaplain “that he had got a license from the Pope to marry another wife, but to avoid disturbance he wished the ceremony to take place very secretly.”<sup>3</sup> On Saturday, May 10, Cranmer, who had just been consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury, cited Queen Catherine before his ecclesiastical court at Dunstable. When, she refused to appear, he declared her “contumacious.” Whereupon, to the shame and dismay of the English nation, the pliant archbishop publicly declared Henry’s marriage with her null and void, and announced and confirmed his secret marriage with Anne Boleyn. The ambitious coquette was then pompously escorted from Greenwich to the Tower for coronation. The attending ceremonies bore the character of a funeral rather than of a public festivity. In a letter dated May 29, 1533, the imperial

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2 That this date is correct is evident from the testimony of Chapuys and of Cranmer. For obvious reasons, an earlier date; November 14, 1532, the day when Henry and Anne sailed from Calais, has been assigned for this sacrilegious ceremony. See Lingard, *History of England*, Vol. V, p. 2;

3 **Hope**, *The First Divorce of Henry VIII*, p. 296.

ambassador Chapuys writes to Charles V, the nephew of Queen Catherine, that the “triumph consisted entirely in the multitude of those who took part in it, but all the people showed themselves so sorry as though it had been a funeral. I am told,” he continues, “their indignation grows daily, and that they live in hope your majesty will interfere. On Saturday, the lady will pass all through London and go to the king’s lodging, and on Sunday to Westminster, where the ceremony of coronation will take place.”<sup>4</sup>

Henry was not slow to discern that his action against Queen Catherine had roused a spirit of discontent among the lower classes, and that the sons of St. Francis had been foremost and loudest in creating it. Indeed, from the day his “secret affair” became a topic of popular comment, the Franciscans endeavored to prevent what they clearly foresaw would lead to serious consequences. Traveling about the country in the discharge of their sacred duties, they freely and fearlessly acquainted the people with the true state of the question and thus gradually succeeded in molding public opinion against the *king’s* ungodly design.<sup>5</sup> “Unspoilt by prosperity,” writes Stone, “their conscience unclouded by self-interest, Henry found them far more difficult to deal with than either the Universities or the monks.

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4 Stone : *Faithful Unto Death*, p. 14, from the Vienna Archives.

5 Mason, *Certamen Seraphicum*, p. 6.

They were intimidated by no threats, no promise of preferment led them astray. The most popular preachers were to be found in their ranks, and the *king* knew that while they were allowed to preach, the people would be told the truth, however much he tried to deceive them.”<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the very men who only a few years before had stood so high in his favor and esteem, were now the object of his scorn and hatred. This he showed openly for the first time in 1532, when he wrote to their minister general, Fr. Paul Pissotus, asking him to depose the provincial Blessed John Forest,<sup>7</sup> probably because he suspected him of having influenced the queen, his penitent, in her recent appeal to Rome. Though this made it clear to the friars that their position was growing critical, it did not intimidate, much less silence them.

Naturally, their friary at Greenwich, under the very eyes of the king and his court, became the storm center in the coming conflict. Its inmates enjoyed the love and respect of the people, and the king realized that it was all-important to make sure of their sentiments regarding his relations with Anne Boleyn. To this end, Thomas Cromwell prevailed on one of the lay brothers of the community, Richard Lyst, by name, to serve him as spy.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Stone, *Faithful Unto Death*, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Parkinson, *The Antiquities of the English Franciscans*, p. 227.

<sup>8</sup> He subsequently left the Order and

Through secret correspondence with him, the wily minister soon learned that the friars were staunch adherents of the queen, and that they were resolved to stand by truth and justice no matter what the consequences would be.

As one of the chief agitators against the divorce the informing lay brother designated the guardian, Fr. William Peyto, a man of deep learning and sterling piety. He was born about the year 1480, at Chesterton in Warwickshire. After completing his education at Oxford, he renounced the world and joined the Franciscan Order. In view of his learning, the university conferred on him the academic degrees and elected him a fellow of Queen’s College. Fr. Peyto had fully imbibed the spirit of St. Francis, and he became a zealous promoter of the reform movement in the Order. He had at one time been confessor to the queen and to Princess Mary, her only surviving child, and had since been elected guardian of the Greenwich friary.<sup>9</sup> In this way, he frequently came in touch with the court, saw with bitter regret

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became a secular priest. As Judas wages for his treachery, the renegade received the vicarage of St. Dunstan’s West. See Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, Vol. II, p. 653, footnote. We shall hear more of Fr. Lyst, when we treat the life of Blessed John Forest.

<sup>9</sup> Leon, *Aureole Seraphique* (Engl. transl.), Vol. IV, p. 846; Stone, *Mary the First, Queen of England*, p. 456.

how wicked flatterers and seducers had brought the king to the verge of perdition.

On Sunday, May 11, 1533, Fr. Peyto had to preach in the Franciscan church at Greenwich.<sup>10</sup> The king, whose

<sup>10.</sup>The following account of Fr. Peyto and Elstow is taken from Mason, *Certamen Seraphicum*, pp. 11-14, who drew from the *Annals* of John Stow. Gairdner's account based on the State Papers (see Hope, *The First Divorce . . .* pp. 274,270) differs considerably from Stow's, especially as regards the day and the year assigned for the event. According to Stow, Fr. Elstow publicly opposed Dr. Curwin on Sunday, May 8, 1538 (a later edition of his *Annals* has May 28, 1533), while Gairdner, presumably on the authority of the State Papers, says it was on Easter Sunday, 1532. Both statements present difficulties. Neither May 8 nor May 28 were Sundays in 1533; however, May 18 was a Sunday in that year. Possibly, then, May 8 is a typographical error and should read May 18; perhaps, too, the copyist for the later edition of the *Annals* misread or misunderstood the Latin *duodetricesima* (28) for *duodevicesima* (18). Accordingly Fr. Elstow's defence occurred on May 18, and Fr. Peyto preached on the preceding Sunday, May 11, the day after Queen Catherine was cited to Cranmer's court at Dunstable.

Cobbett, in his *History of the Protestant Reformation* (p. 61, footnote), regards this solution as probable, while the *Annales Minorum* (Vol. XIX, p. 112) declare that Stow must be read with caution (*caute legendam*), when he assigns 1533 as the year in which Fr. Peyto was banished. Therefore the editors of Volume XIX of the *tinplates*, which was published in 1914, place the whole affair in the year 1532, although their reasons for doing so do not seem entirely convincing.

As to the State Papers, we find that in one case at least they make contradictory statements. On the one hand, they contain a letter written on February 4, 1533, by

secret marriage with Anne Boleyn had by this time been noised abroad, was present, surrounded by his courtiers.

This then was the guardian's chance to sound a last word of rebuke and warning. Presentiments of some Fr. Richard Lyst to Thomas Cromwell, in which the lay brother mentions Fr. Peyto as one of the chief agitators against the King's divorce (see Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*, P. 158). On the other hand, the same State Papers bring a letter written by Chapuys to Emperor Charles V, stating that Fr. Peyto's sermon was held on Easter Sunday, 1532 (see Camm, *Lives of the English; Martyrs*, Vol. I, p. 278). Now one of these letters must be wrongly dated. We take it to be the second, for Lyst would hardly have incriminated Fr. Peyto after the latter's banishment; and he would have been banished by this time had his sermon taken place ten months before.

Other reasons which to us seem to speak for the correctness of Stow's account are the following: 1. That a provincial chapter was held at Canterbury in May, 1533, is very probable; first, because a general chapter had been held at Toulouse the preceding January, at which, as the record quoted by the *Annales Minorum* shows, Fr. Peyto was present; and second, because, as we know, during Lent, 1533, the commissary arrived to replace Blessed John Forest in the provincialship, which would naturally have called for a meeting of the superiors in a chapter. — 2. Again, Stow says that Fr. Peyto was "the very first (*primus* osmium) publicly to rebuke the king for the marriage contracted with Anne Boleyn," which it seems would have been premature and even highly imprudent to do fourteen months before, i.e. in the spring of 1532, when the king's "secret affair" was not yet a topic of public comment. — Finally, in his sermon Fr. Peyto speaks of the marriage as a settled fact, as indeed it was, although the public solemnities had not yet taken place,

impending calamity were written on every countenance when the fearless friar ascended the pulpit. After relating from the Old Testament how King Achab had been misguided by the four hundred false prophets, and how he had insulted and imprisoned the true prophet Micheas and soon after died a most terrible death, the bold preacher turned to Henry and exclaimed: "Even where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, there shall they lick also thy blood, O king. I am that Micheas," he continued, "whom thou wilt hate, because I must speak the truth and tell thee that this marriage is unlawful. And although I foresee that I shall have to eat the bread of affliction and drink the water of sorrow, yet, because the Holy Ghost has inspired and instructed me, I needs must speak." Then he inveighed most vehemently against the king's recent marriage with Anne Boleyn, and conjuring him to leave the path of crime and scandal and to hearken to the voice of conscience, he added: "I confess there are many, yea, too many preachers who for the sake of temporal preferment counsel thee otherwise and unreasonably nourish thy foolish and frail affections. And to what purpose? Forsooth, to procure fat benefices, to acquire riches, to become abbots, to obtain episcopal jurisdiction and other ecclesiastical dignities; and all the while, alas! by these and similar means they betray and ruin thy soul, thy honor, thy

prosperity. These, I dare say, are the four hundred prophets whom the spirit of error and deceit has breathed upon, and who attempt in like manner to mislead and deceive thee. But be on thy guard, O king, that having been deceived thou dost not pay the penalty of Achab whose blood the dogs licked up." Apparently, the king took this first public rebuke with good grace. His fawning courtiers, however, were stung to the quick, and henceforth they were the avowed enemies of the dauntless friars.

In the course of the following week, Fr. Peyto left for Canterbury to attend the provincial chapter, and Henry resolved to make the most of his temporary absence. To undo the effects of his sermon on the minds of the people, he engaged Dr. Curwin, a canon of Hereford, to preach a sermon on the following Sunday, May 18, in defense of his marriage. Dr. Curwin, whose pride and ambition had long since seared his conscience, hailed the opportunity of catering to his royal master and of thus securing his own emolument. Accordingly, on the following Sunday, Henry and his court again assembled in the church at Greenwich. Their eyes beamed with joy and triumph, when Dr. Curwin unscrupulously denounced Queen Catherine and in high-flown terms extolled the king for marrying Anne Boleyn and thereby ensuring the welfare of the kingdom. Feeling

quite safe in the absence of Fr. Peyto, he began to heap insults on his name, calling him a dog, a slanderer, a low-minded and beggarly friar, a plotter, a rebel, a traitor, and finally shouting in boastful defiance, "I speak to thee, Peyto, who makest thyself Micheas, in order to upbraid kings; but, now thou art not to be found, being fled for fear and shame, since thou art not able to answer my arguments."

But the foolhardy speaker and his abettors had failed to reckon with another hero in the Franciscan garb. Great was their dismay and fury when, in the midst of the boaster's shameless tirade, Fr. John Elstow leaped to his feet and exclaimed from the gallery of the church: "Good sir, thou knowest that Fr. Peyto, as he was commanded, has gone to the provincial chapter assembled at Canterbury, and that he has not fled for fear of thee. Thou knowest this very well. To-morrow he will be here again. Meanwhile, I am here as another Micheas to prove from Holy Scripture, at the risk of my life, all those things as true which he hath taught. Here I stand in readiness, and thus, before God and all impartial judges, I challenge thee to this combat. Thee, thee, Curwin, I take to account, who art one of those four hundred prophets, in whom the spirit of falsehood and error is wholly entered; to thee my words are directed, who seekest to establish by adultery the royal succession; to

thee, who art betraying the king into endless perdition; at thee, I say, these words of mine are aimed, at thee, who hast spoken more to satisfy thy own craving for honor and promotion, than to unburden thy clogged conscience or to guard the welfare of the king." Harpsfield, who says he heard the whole account from Elstow himself, writes: "Many other things he would have spoken, and much ado there was to stay him. At the hearing of this the king was cast into a great choler and in a great heat commanded that these friars should be conveyed thither where he should never hear more of them."<sup>11</sup>

On the following day, Fr. Peyto returned from Canterbury. His heart swelled with paternal pride and joy when the brethren told him how bravely one of their number had crossed swords with Dr. Curwin and had defended their guardian's good name and the rights of their lawful queen. With words of sincere gratitude and admiration, he congratulated Fr. Elstow, and at the same time exhorted the community faithfully to follow the voice of conscience in the hour of trial that he felt was now fast approaching. His presentiments proved only too true. That very day a messenger summoned Fr. Peyto and Elstow before the king and his council.

We may picture to ourselves the

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Gasquet, *Henry VIII . . . Monasteries*, Vol. I, p. 103, footnote.

menacing looks of hatred and vengeance that greeted the two friars on their entering the council chamber. Although their exterior bespoke meekness and humility, the fearless determination written on their countenances made it clear that they were ready to sacrifice and suffer all for conscience's sake. On being commanded to give an explanation of their late conduct, Fr. Peyto stepped forward and again rebuked the king for his illicit relations with Anne Boleyn, at the same time predicting that, if he persisted in his iniquity, the hand of a just and avenging God would fall heavily upon him. In the course of the hearing, Henry Bouchier, Earl of Essex, exclaimed that the two friars were traitors and deserved to be put in sacks and thrown alive into the Thames. But they only smiled, and Fr. Elstow turning to the earl, said quietly: "With such things threaten those who have riches and immense possessions, who clothe themselves in gorgeous purple, and who pass their days in pleasures and amusements. For we account them as nothing; rather do we rejoice that we are driven hence for having done our duty; and," he added pleasantly, "we give a thousand thanks to God, since we know the way which leads to heaven to be open by water as well as by land; and therefore it is all the same to us whether we go by this way or by that."

Henry saw that it was useless to bandy

words with these men of God. He was at a loss how to proceed against them. To send them to the block he dared not for fear of the people, who, he well knew, sympathized with his repudiated queen and revered the sons of St. Francis for their heroic zeal in her behalf. It was probably owing to this circumstance that FF. Peyto and Elstow escaped with their lives. For the present, they were imprisoned and after some time banished from the country. Both survived persecution under Henry VIII and later returned to their friary at Greenwich.

Thus FF. Peyto and Elstow were the first publicly to defy the English king, whose unbridled passions were bringing ruin and desolation on the Church and State in England. "It is impossible," the Protestant historian Cobbett declares, "to speak with sufficient admiration of these two men. Ten thousand victories by land or sea would not bespeak such heroism in the winners of these victories as was shown by these friars. If the bishops, or only one-fourth of them, had shown equal courage, the tyrant would have stopped in that mad career which was now on the eve of producing so many horrors. The stand made by these friars was the only instance of bold and open resistance, until he had actually got into his murders and robberies."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cobbett, *History of the Protestant Reformation*, p. 52.

# Reality vs Virtual-Reality

Bishop Giles O.F.M

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Our society seems to have lost the ability to discern fact from fiction. There has been a blurring of the lines of reality. We have failed through some form of “relativity” to discern objective truth from subjective truth. Perhaps the fault lies with our greater dependence upon a “virtual reality” that has been created by our advances in electronics. The movies, television, and now the internet present many fictions in an apparently factual way. On the other hand, maybe it is a truly dumbing down of our intellects either physically or spiritually. Maybe it is a blinding punishment from God for having given our hearts over to other things rather than to Him. In any case it seems clear that something has been lost, or something is definitely out of place, when it comes to discernment.

Physically, we can and do often manipulate our bodies to perceive things in a different manner than what they are outside of us. By stimulating optic nerves with physical pressure rather than with light we can create images within ourselves that are not objectively true outside of ourselves. We can

do the same with auditory nerves, etc. We all have learned long ago that sometimes we cannot trust our senses. To perceive the truth we must first make sure that our senses are not impaired or hindered in any way.

This is fairly simple when we are dealing with the physical world around us. It becomes more complicated as we move to spiritual realities. The truths of The Faith are something that we do not perceive and understand by our own powers. Faith is a gift from God. If we are to perceive and receive this gift of Faith correctly we must insure that we do not have any obstacles or impediments in our way. Pride is perhaps the greatest impediment to receiving the true Faith. Most people look to Faith to find something that they want. A few look to Faith to find what God desires to show them. This is the discerning line between the Catholic Faith and the faith of so many non-Catholics.

The Protestants typify this because they come to faith or the Bible in search of something specific. They subjectively find what they are looking for but, it always comes at the expense of a

great many other and often more important objective truths. For example: those who would like to divorce and remarry search the scriptures to find passages that will suit their desire. They imagine they find what they are looking for, but it requires a different interpretation than was previously given. So they then must declare that the Bible is open to “private interpretation.” In this manner, their “religion,” “doctrine,” or “beliefs” become whatever pleases them at the moment. Many of the literal words of our Lord must then become for them figurative, and the figurative words become literal. The Church established by Jesus Christ must be denied; the obligation for oral confession is rejected; the true Presence in the Holy Eucharist is denied; etc.

The Modernist Novus Ordo sect displays this also in what has been termed “cafeteria style Catholicism.” The Novus Ordo laity often picks the doctrines that they like and reject or ignore the ones they don’t like. Many “Catholics” reject the Church’s teaching concerning marriage; “birth-control,” etc. yet they think they are still Catholic.

Likewise, many Traditionalists have fallen into this same error

because they only wanted the “Latin Mass;” they became blind to all heresy and schism. They wanted the “Latin Mass” at any cost. Tragically, the price paid was most often abandoning obedience to true authority, which caused schisms; or the cost was a denial of one or more doctrines of the Church – as with so many who fell into the Boston (Feeneyite) heresy. Then to defend themselves, they began pointing their fingers at one another claiming that they are the heretics or schismatics; a case of unmitigated projection. Later we see that most of these “Traditionalists” became very “ecumenical” with each other’s errors and sought unity at any price. They are doing just what they found fault with the Novus Ordo for doing with the Protestants. And all these, while they subjectively see “their” faith as being true, are very far from perceiving and accepting the objective and true Faith given to us by God through the Holy Catholic Church.

Each of these have created for themselves a skewed “reality” that is far from the objective truth. They have twisted truth (lied) so much that they now accept the works of their imagination for reality. Their interior world

(virtual reality) is necessarily blind to the truth of the real world.

This brings us to the question of culpability. Is the subjective heretic as guilty as the objective one? While only God knows the true hearts and minds of His creatures, He has given us understanding into some of the principles necessary to discern culpability. In the Church, one is labeled as a heretic if he has proven himself obstinate in his errors. This finds application for example, when a priest may unawares speak error in a sermon. Objectively he has stated heresy but, subjectively he has not, because that was not his intention; and when his mistake is brought to his attention, he quickly corrects it. The person that speaks error and refuses to change or correct it, is deemed by the Church as a heretic, and is no longer a member of the Church.

In the Catechism we learn of the things that are necessary to make oneself culpable of mortal sin. 1. The evil must be seriously wrong, or considered seriously wrong. 2. We must have understanding that it is seriously wrong and 3. We must fully consent to it.

If any of these conditions are missing culpability is lessened to

the point of reducing what would be a mortal sin to a venial sin or not a sin at all.

How culpable are so many heretics often depends upon how much understanding they have of their error. They may if they cooperate with the grace of God receive instruction and turn away from their subjective heresy and thus avoid objective heresy. There are probably many who never voice their errors, but hold them silently inside themselves, never even realizing that they are holding onto error. Such mistakes are overcome when we make it our practice to recite in the Act of Faith that we believe all that the Holy Catholic Church teaches. We acknowledge that it is God who speaks to us through the Catholic Church, and believe all that She teaches. In this manner, we reject any and all errors that we may possibly unknowingly hold on to. We remain humble and docile (teachable) to all that which God tells us to believe through the Catholic Church.

In any situation, what is ultimately necessary is that heretics reject the error and return to the truth. Those who are obstinate in holding onto their error are deemed to be formal heretics. These are no longer

members of the Catholic Church. There are many who are born into heretical sects and are filled with such prejudice against the Catholic Church (and therefore against God) that they have no natural means of dismissing their errors. This seems theoretically possible at least for a short time. In our way of thinking, God will not allow this condition to continue for a person's entire life. In such instances God gives actual graces that will lead them to begin to question their beliefs, and thus search out and find the Catholic Church and the truth.

Few seem to cooperate with this grace because it involves also cooperating with the grace of humility. Humility is necessary because the heretic has to admit (at least to himself) that he was deceived or was wrong. This often demands a drastic change of course which must be explained to those around them. Pride and vanity recoil at the mere suggestion of admitting having been in the wrong. In consequence of this, most continue in their errors rather than admit that they were in the wrong.

While we cannot enter into hearts and minds as God does, we must leave the judging of relative

or subjective guilt to Him. We must however loudly denounce the objective errors that are all around us. In this manner those who have unknowingly or unwillingly fallen, will receive the actual grace to re-examine their beliefs more carefully. The question then becomes how must we go about pointing out the errors of others?

The answer is a simple one; we must follow the example of Our Lord. With the proud and the obstinate He denounced them boldly and publically. This was so that everyone would perceive that there is no harmony with Truth and falsehood. With the weak that had fallen, Jesus was meek and mild. He readily and eagerly forgave them and sent them on their way with the admonition to be more careful in the future. In our weekly novena to St. Anthony we address him as the "Hammer of Heretics, while being a saint of gentleness and concern for sinners." This was the method employed by Jesus, and it must also become the method employed by us.

There is no need to condone evil or compromise the truth while being compassionate toward those who have fallen through ignorance or weakness. Those

who are cooperative with the grace of God will be won over to the Truth and the Church by such conduct. Those who refuse are most probably abandoned by God to their reprobate passions and desires – as we read in the first chapter of St. Paul to the Romans.

The founders and leaders of these sects who are filled with pride and self-righteousness are beyond the aid of humble compassion and aid, and should be denounced openly and publically as their errors are both open and public and are a cause of scandal to all who hear them. For the love of those who may be deceived we must hammer away at the proud, obstinate heretic. We must warn all who will cooperate with the grace of God that these are in error and are on the path to Hell; and are likewise taking all who will follow them to Hell with them.

Let us unite unceasing prayer with our words: whether we must speak as a hammer against obstinate heretics; or with gentleness and compassion for the weak or deceived. It is ultimately the actual grace of God that enlightens the mind and strengthens the will to do good and to avoid evil. There are

no “magic” words or arguments for us to use. We must strive to be humble in all our words – not thinking our words or logic will change the hearts and minds of others – but always remember that it is God who enlightens and teaches. We might be an instrument that He can use, but the work is all His. Our first method therefore, is to ask in humble prayer from God the grace and the will to cooperate with His grace for those we wish to help.

To safeguard ourselves we must insure that our spiritual perceptions are not impaired in any way. This is accomplished with true humility, and constantly striving to draw nearer to God in Faith and Charity. We must pray for the grace of the true Faith as well as the grace to persevere in it. We must renew daily, if not more often, the Act of Faith in all humility. In this manner, we will not be deceived by subjective or virtual realities, but will see clearly the objective Truth of God. God truly gives His grace to those who humbly and sincerely seek it out.

# Franciscan Saints

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JANUARY 24

## THE SERVANT OF GOD MARGARET STADLER

Virgin, Second Order

It is well known that our holy Father St. Francis had great devotion to the holy Childhood of Jesus. He was the first who, in order to honor the holy Childhood, built a crib, such as we have them at Christmas, and with the approval of the pope had the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered at it. The childlike purity and simplicity of his soul as well as his ardent love for the Word made flesh drew him to this devotion, and many of his children followed his example.

Of his followers, the members of the Second Order, the Poor Clares, whose spirit expresses itself very especially in the virtues of the holy Childhood, were particularly noted for their tender devotion to the Divine Child.

Among them the servant of God Margaret distinguished herself in a special way. She lived in the convent at Sefflingen, not far from Ulm in Suabia. One day while she was absorbed in contemplating the loveliness of her God who came into this

world as a child, hours passed without Margaret's being aware of it. At the time she should have been at her duties in the kitchen.

But while our Divine Saviour fed His spouse with heavenly sweetness, He wished also to provide for the bodily nourishment of her fellow sisters. For a singularly beautiful little boy was seen in the kitchen preparing the food, and when it was set before the sisters at mealtime, they declared that they had never tasted anything so delicious. But the wonderful little cook had vanished.

From that time on Margaret felt herself kindled anew with veneration of the Child Jesus. Rich in heavenly merits, her life came to a close in the year 1521.

### ON DEVOTION TO THE HOLY INFANCY

1. Consider how Mother Church herself encourages us to honor the holy Childhood of Jesus by the observance of Christmas and the ensuing season which extends to the feast of the Purification of the

Blessed Virgin Mary. We make the best of this observance if we frequently reflect upon the great love of our Saviour in coming into this world as a little child, and living so many years in humble seclusion in order to win quiet and humble hearts for Himself. How pleasing to our Lord the devotion to His holy Childhood is, we learn from the fact that He has appeared to so many holy souls in the form of a child, as, for example, to St. Anthony, to St. Felix, to St. Veronica Juliani, and others. In the form of a child, too, he performed the work of our saintly Margaret.

2. Consider how the sentiments of love, innocence, and simplicity from which this devotion proceeded in our holy Father St. Francis will also increase in our hearts by means of this same devotion. What can a soul that has nothing in common with the world desire more earnestly than to be well grounded in this innocent, childlike spirit so pleasing to God? Therefore, practice this devotion to the Child Jesus not only during the Christmas season but throughout the year. --- For the sake of the dear Child Jesus, cheerfully interest yourself in children,

especially those that are poor and neglected.

3. All true veneration calls for imitation as well. In the matter of devotion to the holy Infancy, the point which parents and superiors should imitate consists in this, that, like Joseph and Mary, they exercise continual solicitude for those entrusted to their care; while children and subordinates practice obedience and submission like the Child Jesus, and all of whatever station learn to be humble and modest. And if they have not remained children by their innocence, let them make amends for all their transgressions with sincere penance, in order thus to return to the innocence of childhood. For thus says our Lord: "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"(Matt. 18:3).

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O God, whose only-begotten Son hath appeared in the substance of our flesh, grant, we beseech Thee, that by Him in whom outwardly we recognize our likeness, we may deserve to be inwardly created anew. Who with Thee liveth and reigneth forever and ever. Amen.

# Our Catholic Culture and Heritage

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

## Part III

**Author's Note:** Selected statements in this article were taken from *The Mystical Body of Christ and the Reorganization of Society* by Fr. Denis Fahey, C. S. Sp.

The powers of darkness understand all too well how to go about destroying the soul. The demons have been practicing on numberless souls for thousands of years. They have discovered a simple, but all-important fact. They don't need to constantly devise new ways in which to deceive the good soul. Men are so blind and ignorant of the ways of Hell, they are continually fooled into sin in the same manner over and over again. So much for paying attention and not repeating the same mistake multiple times!

Over our two-thousand year history, many Catholics have fallen from the True Faith. Because Fallen Nature affects us all in the same manner, the reasons for Catholics apostatizing haven't changed much. Simply put, human failure is the same in 1050 A.D. or 2013 A.D.

There is a difference, though, between a singular person who

falls and affects a few people; and a much larger number of people who leave the Church (or simply are quite weak) and have a devastating effect upon a portion or all of society.

Perhaps the two best known examples are the Arian heresy and the Protestant Revolution. Both produced the fall of millions of Catholics over large geographical areas. The affects of the Protestants were so devastating the Catholic world never recovered. In fact, those fractures brought on Freemasonry, Modernism and Communism among a number of other errors.

Each of these major errors chipped away at the Catholic influence in society. The Eternal Truth was no longer important. Lies produced an ever increasing web more lies. The longer they were told, the more people believed them.

The Protestant Revolution immediately affected the European monarchies. Royalty for example, in Germany and Poland, followed Luther into heresy. The result was perhaps something not previously experienced among Catholic

nations; certainly not in the way events unfolded.

Catholic life and culture as they knew it was dramatically changed. The lay Catholic who followed Luther or Henry VIII fell into an essentially different world. The most important of these changes was not having the Mass and Sacraments.

The differences may not have been perceived initially, for in many cases the Protestants took over previously Catholic churches, but interiorly the channels of grace had been severed. There was no way their life would remain the same. If it was changing as individuals and families, then society was changing.

As hatred for the Catholic Church grew, so did the violence toward it. As the violence grew in the now-Protestant countries, not only were churches sacked but Catholics were martyred. All of Hell had been unleashed upon these once-Catholic cities and towns and all that was once considered sacred, was now being torched.

Within 200 years, Freemasonry was formed. As a secret society, its goals and purposes were hidden from the eyes of the world. In fact, many in the beginning who learned of its diabolical

desires chose not to believe what they considered to be unrealistic goals.

We may now comment in hindsight in comparing these two great evils. Perhaps an analogy is the best way to describe them. If Protestantism is the bonfire which was started with scattered kindling, then Masonry is a continuation of the same fire but which has grown through a series of secretly and carefully designed bombs and explosions. The source of these explosions is never revealed, but the fire has ravaged country after country.

Protestantism opened the door to Freemasonry through its emphasis on individualism (personal interpretation and private judgment) in religion. From this rose an individualism and separatism in political and economic activity. The child of these errors was naturalism. This was Satan's answer from the divisions arising from the quarrels between Protestant denominations.

Freemasonry accomplished in the French Revolution of 1789 that which the Protestant Revolution did not attempt – *“to set up for the first time in public of the new ideal of a purely naturalistic society striving for the universality of*

*the Catholic Church. The State or Nation, falsely holding that it is not obliged to make profession of any religion, proclaims that religion is a private matter and, after the model of the Masonic Society, declares itself superior both to the Mystical Body of Christ and to all man-made forms of religion professed by its individual subjects.”*

*“Modern History since 1789 is, to a large extent, the account of the domination of State after State by the naturalistic supranaturalism of Freemasonry, behind which has been steadily emerging the still more strongly organized naturalistic supranationalism of the Jewish Nation. That is why the post-revolutionary epoch has witnessed, in country after country, persistent attacks on the programme of Christ the King in regard to the Church, the State, the Family, Education, the Religious Orders, Secret Societies, Liberty of the Press and Private Property. After every successful Masonic Revolution since the first in 1789 down to and including the Spanish Revolution of 1931, the world soon began to hear of the country’s entering upon the path of ‘progress’ by the introduction of ‘enlightened’ reforms, such as, the separation of Church and State, the legalization of divorce,*

*the suppression and banishment of religious orders and congregations, the glorification of Freemasonry, the secularization of the schools, the nationalization of property, and the unrestrained license of the press. These were, of course, simply, the results of Satan’s utilization of his visible instruments in order to eliminate the influence of Christ the King. Satan himself knows well that the carrying out of his programme can only lead to savagery and chaos, through the ruthless enslavement of the many by the few. Most of his subordinates, however, do not grasp this. Blinded by the suggestions of the tempter and by their own pride, men overthrow the bulwarks of society reared on faith in Christ and on our membership in Him, with disastrous results, especially for the poor and the lowly.”*

Another child, or effect, of the French Revolution, is the error of Modernism. It has been seen over the past 50 years just what happens to a Divine Institution when it has traitors among the hierarchy and ignorant Catholics among the laity. This topic will be covered in greater detail in the next article.

It must be noted here for the uninformed, that the naturalism in society and Modernism in the

Church are one and the same, for indeed, again, they have the same mother, Freemasonry. This is why, frankly, it is difficult to separate the “twins of the same mother.”

There have been many apologists among the Modernist clergy for the ‘Enlightenment,’ the latest of whom is Joseph Ratzinger. If such men have accepted the errors of those who hate Christ, how can this NOT have an effect upon society.

A fact which is loudly rejected today because of the influence of Freemasonry, is that the Roman Catholic Church has been, and must necessarily be the greatest of influences in society. It was always meant to be the manner in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ was to spread through the four corners of the world.

The call for a completely secular society is nothing but a direct rejection of Jesus Christ, His Church and Gospel. Sadly, there are far too many misguided and naïve individuals who are not aware of the devilish designs of Freemasonry. But then, this is why these evil men and their errors hide behind the veil of such nice-sounding descriptions as the “enlightment.”

Who doesn't want to be

enlightened? As a Catholic, we should all want to be enlightened by the Holy Ghost. Is this what is meant by those Sons of Satan? The answer lies in Satan's angelic name, Lucifer, which means the Light-Bearer.

It is just like Satan to use his own name, although under the cover of darkness, to make it seem as though it is “a good and wholesome thing” to follow a movement and false philosophy which is meant to destroy the Christian Order in Society.

To be sure, Satan has desired this spiritual coup d'etat since his fall. He has been the Master of Deceit, Lies, Revolutions and Errors. It took the Protestants, who split Christendom, to make this possible.

It has been man's worst-case scenario, i.e., to undermine the Greatest Good in Society and His Church, but all the while being able to convince the untold and misguided masses that doing just that is what is best for society.

There are those who look around and wonder just what has happened to society. Some understand in varying degrees, but many do not. It is quite amazing to hear adults who are supposed to be competent in their respective positions to come up

with solutions to these critical problems. That which we witness at this time is nothing short of frustration on one hand, and utter buffoonery on another. Once society was willing to accept a godless, secular world, then all of the dominoes began, one by one, to fall.

This writer has stated numerous times on *The Catholic Faith Radio Program*, that the solutions to society's problems are not complicated, it simply takes a person who is courageous enough to speak and educate the unthinking masses. One must ask the question, though, is it too late? For myself, I would rather die with a spiritual sword in my hand, than to be found guilty before God of cowardice.

The history of past civilizations provides important lessons for us today, but who is watching? Who is willing and courageous enough to understand that society must be guided by Holy Mother Church. She is the voice which provides the answers to today's ills (abortion, homosexuality, pornography, fornication, immodesty, false philosophies and the numerous errors of the Modernists in the Church and Society). The encyclicals from Popes Pius IX to Pius XII provide the answers to today's ills.

**JANUARY 2014**

Many have asked the question, 'How much worse can it get?' To provide perspective, that question was first heard in the late 1970's. Those years now seem to be tolerable in some manner compared with the chaos of today.

A possible answer to that question may be considered in this way. Man has crossed back and forth between civility and barbarism numerous times. It is likely that many today could never conceive of the 21<sup>st</sup> century man returning to a barbaric way of life, but yet, that is exactly what this writer believes has happened.

Once the men of today showed a willingness to kill their young (abortion), and then kill the elderly (euthanasia), this society as we now know it, will not last much longer. Not only has man gravely offended God, which is the main reason for man's demise, but he has also destroyed a sufficient birth rate by which Western Civilization must have if it is going to survive. Man's 'progress' is the sword which inflicts the fatal wound.

To be Continued

Next issue: **The Effect of the Destruction of the Catholic Culture Upon the Church and its Members**

# Our Best Friend

TRANSLATED BY BERNARD A. HAUSMANN, S.J.

FROM THE GERMAN BY CHRISTIAN PESCH, S.J.

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## CHAPTER IX

A Friend Always Ready to  
Come to Our Assistance

*“Him who comes to me, I will  
not cast out” (Jn. 6:37).*

1. *The constant presence of our Lord.* All human friendship is, of necessity, inadequate. Our friend is sometimes absent when we need him most. We are in want, embarrassment, danger, difficulty, or disquiet, and he does not suspect it. And even if he knows of our distress, distance or circumstances may keep him from our side and may prevent him; despite the best of intentions, from lending his aid. Again a human friend is not always in the same good and gracious mood; if we approach him at the wrong time with our concerns, he may grant us our wish with visible reluctance or put us off to another time. As a rule, human friendships can withstand only a limited strain; if the demands of friendship are too frequent or too great, a cooling, or even an extinction

of love takes place. Friendship demands that we do not become a burden to our friend, but that, as far as we can, we make his life easier and more agreeable.

But none of these imperfections are found in friendship with our divine Saviour. Distance, for instance, never separates Him from us. He promised His disciples: “Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Mt. 28:20). “Where two or three are gathered together for My sake, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20). These promises, of course, apply in the first place to our Lord’s presence in the universal Church and at public services. But even when we pray in the solitude of our rooms, our Saviour is with us; else He had not given us the counsel to pray in the secrecy of our chambers (cf. Mt. 6:6). He gave as a reason that the Father sees in secret; but what the Father sees, the Son sees also not only as God, but also as man. Moreover, He promised His

disciples: "When they bring you before tribunals for My name's sake, 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay' ... and 'a hair of your head shall not perish' (cf. Lk. 21:15-18), because at the resurrection I will restore all things." Let us recall the incident of the first martyrdom. St. Stephen saw the heavens opened and the Son of man seated at the right hand of God (cf. Acts 7:55), witnessing his combat and prepared to take him at once to heaven and crown him with the victor's crown; for "He who overcomes, I will permit him to sit with Me upon My throne: as I also have overcome and have sat with My Father on His throne" (Apoc. 3:21). In the Apocalypse we read that St. John received a mission from Christ to write to the seven bishops of Asia Minor and to remind them of their good and evil deeds and to set before them the corresponding rewards and punishments.

But not only is our Saviour always present in the whole Church and in each individual Christian with His knowledge and external aid, but He is present also in a more special and intimate manner.

He said to His Apostles: "If you remain in Me through charity, I will remain in you and will conserve and augment the spiritual life in your souls as the vine conserves and augments the life of the branches." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:4, 5). St. Paul compares Christ and the faithful to the head and members of a human body, and expresses the desire: "May we always grow in the exercise of charity as members of a mystical body in union with Christ, Who is the head of this body; may we grow by means of our every deed and suffering. For the whole growth of the body proceeds from Christ. All together form a compact, living organism, in which each organ has its peculiar place and function not only for its own advantage but for the advantage of the whole body" (cf. Eph. 4:15, 16). The love which dwells in the hearts dedicated to Christ is the life-giving sap, the vital energy which unifies all members and continually

imparts to them vital activity. The Council of Trent explains this doctrine of the faith as follows: “Since Jesus Christ continually communicates to the just that strength which precedes all their good works, accompanies them, and follows them even as the head communicates energy to the members and the vine to the branches,” nothing is wanting to the just to bring forth fruits of eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

Christ, therefore, is not only externally in our midst, but He is united to us interiorly in a most intimate way; He is never distant from us unless we separate ourselves from Him through our own fault. He prayed to His heavenly Father for all those who believe in Him: I pray for them, “that all may be one, even as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us; . . . and the glory that Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are One” (Jn. 17:20 ff.). This glory is the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father (cf. Jn. 1:14). He has given us this glory, yes, even Himself: that we may always be united to Him and through Him to the Father.

2. *Jesus is always prepared to help us.* The mere presence of a friend of itself is insufficient. Our friend must in addition be ready to listen to our requests and to grant, them insofar as they are reasonable and can be granted. In this respect also our divine Saviour is a friend such as never yet graced human society. What, after all, is the real reason for His uninterrupted presence in our midst if not precisely to hear and grant our just requests? He is the only King who grants audiences unceasingly by day and by night. Indeed, we may go further and say what we should not have dared to say had He Himself not suggested it. Great nobles frequently have a servant constantly at their side whose duty it is to obey every whim of their master. Are not we, because of the goodness of our Saviour, such lords? Is not He, so to speak, our servant, always ready to listen to every request that we come to make? Does He ever send us away without assistance? He has said: “I am come to serve (cf. Mt. 20:28), I am in your midst as One who serves” (cf. Lk. 22:27). These words, of course, apply primarily to the time when He dwelt on earth in the form of a servant (cf. Phil.

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1 Sess. 6, c. 16.

2:7). But He speaks of Himself in His glorified state in similar terms. As the future judge, He compares Himself with a master who returns late at night and finds his servants faithfully discharging their duties; and He concludes with the words: "Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them recline at table and will come and serve them" (Lk. 12:37). Men do not act like this; our Saviour in this instance applies the parable and designates Himself as the servant of His servants. We know, and Christ Himself indicates as much in this simile, that He is and remains the Lord, and that we are and remain His servants. But this is precisely the greatness, the consoling condescension of the love of our Saviour; by His omnipotence He fills up the infinite gulf between His greatness and our nothingness; and even more, His love compels Him to invert the relationship and makes Him the servant of His friends.

We must recall here still another statement of our Lord, one which only He could dare make. He tells us that we should act like a widow who could not obtain justice against her adversary from an unjust judge. She

finally became so importunate with this judge that he said to himself: "Because this widow bothers me, I will do her justice, lest by continually coming she weary me" (cf. Lk. 18:5). What application did our Lord draw from this parable? That we are to present our petitions importunately day and night; and that we shall more surely obtain help from God than this widow did from the unjust judge.

It would certainly be inconsiderate to rouse our earthly friends from their slumbers in order to tell them of our needs. But with our Lord we need not exercise such consideration. Day and night He is ready to listen to us; for Him there is no inconvenient hour. He tells us in another parable of a man who came at night to the house of his friend and roused him to obtain bread, for he had received an unexpected visitor. His friend answered: "Don't bother me, I have already retired; you cannot expect me to get up again to give you bread." But the other kept right on knocking and begging. "I tell you," our Saviour continued, "if the master of the house would not get up for the sake of his friend, he would do so, nevertheless, and give him

all he wanted because of his importunity.” Consequently, we are here practically commanded to be importunate. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you” (Lk. 11:9). Have we ever heard such words from the lips of any other friend? Our Saviour, therefore, cannot take it amiss if we believe His words and act on them. It is true that He is speaking in these parables of His heavenly Father, who will certainly hear us; yet the will of the Father is also the will of the Son, and the human will of Christ is perfectly conformed to His divine will. The heart of our Saviour is generous toward all who call upon it, however many they may be, however great the number of their requests, however importunate their desires, provided only that they are desires worthy of a friend of Jesus Christ. Indeed our Saviour is the more pleased, the more often we come to Him, the more we ask of Him, the more importunate our desires to become possessed of His treasures.

Nor do inconsiderate conduct, faults, or sins diminish His readiness to help if we but return to Him with a contrite heart. No

human friend would tolerate the treatment which we accord our Saviour. The ingratitude of men is keenly felt by His divine Heart as He revealed so explicitly to St. Margaret Mary. But as soon as we say sincerely “I am sorry,” He is at once ready to bestow His friendship on us once more; hence, we must not despair after an unfortunate fall; not even after repeated falls. But we must cast ourselves at His feet with the sentiments of a Mary Magdalen, and we, too, shall hear the words: “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

3. Our *Saviour at times apparently denies us His assistance.* This happens especially when we ask for something that we think would be for our good, when actually it would prove harmful. How often the attainment of some temporal advantage for which we pray so earnestly, would prove to be to the detriment of our soul! We do not know this, but our Saviour does; consequently, He does not grant our request but gives us something else instead which will prove beneficial. Similarly we would often be delivered from pain, although it would be far better for us to obtain the strength to bear the pain

with resignation. Thus St. Paul asked our Lord earnestly and repeatedly to be delivered from a heavy cross. But He answered: "My grace is sufficient for thee," for strength is made perfect in weakness; in the weakness of man the conquering power of divine grace is made manifest. It is for this reason that the Apostle gloried in his infirmity. "For," he said, "when I am weak, then I am strong" through the help of my Lord who stands at my side (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7 ff.).

Our Saviour has promised great progress on the road of perfection to all those who diligently honor His Sacred Heart. Some, of course, may say that despite the practice of this devotion they are still very imperfect. We must remember, however, that it is not at all necessary that we perceive the workings of grace in our souls. If we did, it might engender spiritual pride. Since it is better for the soul not to regard that which it has attained, but to look rather to what is still before (cf. Phil. 3:13), God frequently hides from it His graces and shows it instead its faults. On one occasion St. Gertrude prayed for various persons. During her prayer she

saw in a vision the Sacred Heart in which a stream had its source which fructified all about it. She understood that this stream represented the graces which she had obtained through her intercession, and she asked our Lord: "What will these graces profit those for whom I have prayed? They do not perceive the effects of my prayers, do not know that they have received anything and consequently experience no consolation." Our Lord answered her: "I know when to reveal to them the effects of your prayers and I will do so at the proper time."<sup>2</sup> On another occasion our Lord told her that He did not take all imperfections from His servants; for in combating these they gave Him special honor and proved their fidelity.

Our Lord seems to desert a soul especially at the time of interior desolation when the light of faith, which once shone so brightly, grows dim; when the courage, which once animated the soul, gives place to despondency; when disgust takes the place of the joy she once experienced in prayer, in divine service, and in

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<sup>2</sup> Gertrude, *Gesandter der göttlichen Liebe*, Freiburg, 1915, bk. 3, Chap. 76, p. 262.

the reception of the sacraments; and when, in addition, violent and stubborn temptations flood the soul and bring it to the very brink of despair. It seems to such a soul that a loving Saviour does not exist, or if He does, that He has entirely abandoned the soul. It is in vain that such a soul struggles to escape from this pitiable condition; it makes as little progress as the apostles did when they struggled on the Sea of Genesareth against wind and wave while their Master prayed for them on the mountain top (cf. Mt. 14:23, 24). Every soul that takes its religious life seriously must endure such an agony comparable to that which our Lord endured in the Garden of Olives; but, most of all, great saints, those whom our Lord wishes to admit to special intimacy. Such experience is for them a difficult but at the same time salutary purgatory, which purifies them from all inordinate self-love and self-complacency, and prepares them for the reception of extraordinary graces. St. Catherine of Siena is commonly considered to be the greatest saint that graced the end of the so-called dark ages. She had already attained a high degree of sanctity before such a

cross was laid on her shoulders. In addition to great aridity of soul, temptations to sins of the most debasing nature tormented her soul, temptations made the more vivid by visible pictures and external attractions. She had no peace day or night and ardently longed for death. At length she conquered these temptations. It was then that our Saviour appeared to her and consoled her. "O my Lord," she said to Him, "where were You when my heart was tormented by this filth?" "I was in the midst of thy heart," our Lord answered. "What?" exclaimed St. Catherine, "Thou, purity itself, wast in a heart so full of uncleanness?" "But did these impure pictures cause you pleasure or sadness?" "The greatest sadness and displeasure." "And who caused this if not I, hidden in thy heart?"

No matter how great the darkness which encompasses our souls, our Saviour will always remain with us if we wish to remain with Him. But if Christ is with us, who shall prevail against us? (Cf. Rom. 8:31.)

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