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The Lamentation of Christ

by Giotto

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Building on Foundations

We have received a letter stating that the previous editor of The Seraph (Bishop Louis Vezelis OFM) named names and was very precise in his condemnation of the errors of the world. The implication is that the current editor is indifferent, weak, or wishy-washy in pointing out the errors and who are behind them.

It is our position that we have no need to repeat what has been researched and proven. Our objective is to move forward and build upon that which our predecessor has done. In our humble opinion, it has already been stated and proven that the Novus Ordo is heretical and invalid. This is completely our position today. Just as it is not necessary for us to research and point out the heresies and errors of each leader or minister in the Anglican sect, we think it is just as needless to do this with the Modernist Novus Ordo sect. For all those with any knowledge of the True Faith, it is undeniable that the Novus Ordo is a New Order, a New Faith, just as Anglicanism was a new order and a new faith. We do not need to look far into the person of

Bergoglio (“Pope Francis”) to see the falsity of it all. We do not even need to look because Bergoglio is a product of the false religion of the Novus Ordo. He is the product of the errors of: Ratzinger (“Benedict XVI”), Wojtyla (“John-Paul II”), etc. We do not expect heresy to produce orthodoxy.

If we want names and condemnations it is a simple matter. Just as anyone who aligns himself with the Anglican church is a heretic and we need not look any further, so it is that all who align themselves with the Novus Ordo are heretics. All those “bishops” and “priests” in union with the false pope “Francis” are heretics. All the laity in union with these Novus Ordo clergy are likewise heretics. They are outside the Church and need to return to the True Catholic Church if they are to be saved.

The same is to be said of all the illegitimate “Traditionalist” sects, “bishops,” and “priests.”

These have all been named and condemned; proven not to be Catholic by The Seraph. Your editor accepts this as having

been accomplished. Rather than focus precious time and attention trying to reprove the already proven (reinventing the wheel) we would rather focus our efforts and attention to building up The Faith in the hearts and minds of our readers. We think that a solid sense of what is Catholic, needs to be built up in today's world. It is necessary to show what is not Catholic, but it is equally necessary to show what is.

Our long time readers may recall a series printed in the last volume of *The Seraph*: "Right Order vs. Demonic Anarchy." In there, we show the origins and at least one heresy (That is all that is required.) of each sect to prove that these sects are not Catholic and therefore are to be avoided by all Catholics.

Let us not continue to beat a dead horse. It will never move again. Your editor has chosen to try and move in a more positive direction with the simple and direct teachings, practices, beliefs, and history of the True Church and her saints.

It is our humble opinion that many are not even aware of the basic doctrines and history of the Church. It has been over forty years since the Novus

Ordo besieged the once Catholic churches, schools, universities, hospitals, etc. A couple of generations have been deprived of any solid Catholic formation. The previous generations that still maintained a sense of what it means to be a Catholic had little or no need for this instruction. Their greatest need was to have the errors of the heretics pointed out so that they may avoid the traps and pick up with the Catholic spirit that they once knew. Today's generation has no foundation to return to. There is nothing to build upon. We think it necessary to build up a Catholic spirit and a Catholic sense so that souls can move in a positive direction for the greater honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls.

We are reminded of St. Paul's admonition concerning circumcision. (Rom. 2, 25-29) There are many who are circumcised in the flesh, but it is for their punishment. They have the law but do not follow it. The Gentiles, on the other hand, who are uncircumcised in the flesh and have not the law, but are circumcised in the spirit and practice the law in the spirit; these shall be saved. For their un-circumcision is regarded as

circumcision. And those who were circumcised were regarded as having un-circumcision. In our day, it appears that there are many who are baptized, but their baptism is only for their greater damnation, because they do not have or practice the graces that should be theirs.

While The Seraph cannot turn this completely around, it is our hope to at least put a small dent in this glacial onslaught of spiritual anarchy. The enemy is clear, what is needed is for our soldiers to have something worth fighting for. May we, with God's help, give to the next generation a True Faith that they will desire to live, defend, and fight for. Too often the fighter loses sight of his

ideals and has no understanding of why he is fighting. He just fights because that is all he has ever done. We think this has happened among many who call themselves "Traditionalists."

We recognize and are grateful for all Bishop Louis Vezelis OFM has done, and left in our unworthy hands. We desire not to reject or undermine any of it, but rather to take this and build upon it.

May the prayers and support of our readers gain for us the grace to faithfully cooperate with God's Will and build up the Faith in this next generation, so that they will love and defend it in equal or greater measure than our predecessors have done.

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The End of All Things

Bishop Bonaventure OFM

“My son, when you come to the service of the Lord, prepare thy soul for tribulation.” These are the words which Divine Wisdom passes along to every man, woman, and child who is sealed with the everlasting mark of Holy Baptism. It follows with eminently good reason, then, that anyone wishing to adhere to his or her Baptismal Vows will endure the inescapable crucible of tribulations.

The Catholics living today suffer a heretofore unseen degree of suffering. Oh yes, the martyrs spilled their blood in horrific fashion, often to the delight of demonically guided minions. Those of us living through the Great Apostasy, however, suffer on a daily basis a unique death known as a “mystical martyrdom.” This is what Saint Paul is referring to when he tells us: “I die daily.” This is far from a contradiction of the passage of Scripture that states: “It is appointed to man once to die.” On the contrary, this spiritual death, which is a dry martyrdom, is given only to a select few. By the grace of God, His chosen ones, the Elect, are called upon

to suffer in this most purifying flame.

With a clear understanding of the necessity of the Christian to actually follow Jesus Christ, we are capable of no longer viewing our grievously painful afflictions of spirit as punishments, but rather as the loving touches of the flames of purification so necessary to our progression in sanctity.

Judging by the general direction toward which many pious conversations tend, it becomes increasingly apparent that Our Lord’s rebuke of His own Apostles applies equally to us: “Why did you doubt Me, o ye of little faith?” The disciples on the road to Emmaus, one of whom tradition holds was the fervent and holy Cleophas, yes these same ones who followed day and night the words of Life, even they were ignorant of how fitting it was for the Messiah to suffer and die for the sins of man. They did, in fact, have a stark familiarity with the prophecies of the Old Testament, many of which were read every week in the synagogues. In another

manner of speaking, they knew what their respective crosses were, and what the pursuit of sanctity entailed, and yet they were blinded in that moment to the true meaning of the sorrows that filled their aching hearts.

Our most loving Father reminds us in those tragically seldom-repeated words: “Those whom I love, I rebuke and chastise.” What a paradox of Divine Wisdom! To suffer is to be accepted into the open arms of the Most Holy Trinity! To die is to live! Only the gleaming light of supernatural faith can show us the beauty of suffering tribulations. Only Jesus Christ, Whom St. John so clearly calls The True Light that has come into the world, only He can open our minds and hearts to perceive these mystical realities.

Too often we are like those disciples going on their journey, carrying on good and holy conversation, and yet missing the greater truths entirely. Do you realize, dear readers, that there are many words from the Book of Apocalypse that apply to us **in this very moment in the Church’s history?** We would take greater consolation in our truthfully painful circumstances if we would recall Holy Mother

Church depicted as the expectant Mother, exiled into the desert and weeping, while suffering the pangs of childbirth. You see, the prophecy of the Blessed Virgin at La Salette has become a bewildering reality for us: “The Church will be in eclipse.”

So then, why do we wonder so much, taking too much time on superficialities, when we are called to be great warriors for the final age of Christendom? Some of us will even have the blessing of being taken to Heaven immediately when the Judge comes, having already suffered our purgations here on earth. This means that the blessings to be counted most carefully are precisely the ones that we so vigorously avoid as a plague, namely our individual crosses.

In God’s Providence, tremendous stores of graces are given to those who unite themselves in mind, body, and soul to His Most Beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified. Let no one be deceived into thinking that Jesus is the God of temporal prosperity. He repeatedly scorned earthly possessions, although never failing to teach us that they are for our use, and not our servitude to creatures.

“There are many mansions in My Father’s house...” He goes on to assure us of our immensely magnificent calling, when He says: “If it were not so, I would have told you.”

Let us then see ourselves for what we truly are: living members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, which has now indeed reached the 12th Station of the Cross. We are hanging with Jesus in agony, bleeding with wounds, heavy with the agony of hearts torn with grief and derision. But this is our greatest treasure! Unless guided by grace, the soul will never understand this.

The simple faith of children often puts to shame the supposed depth of learning in adults. It is

not the knowing of the truth that sanctifies and justifies our souls before the Lord. It is rather to be found in flying to the embrace of these many crosses, this Divine Love, and offering our own lives as acceptable sacrifices for ourselves, and for the sins of many nations. We are called to be just as every other saint has been to this very day: gentle lambs of immolation, who do not kick and scream at what they must suffer, but rather undergo this one death as a punishment for sin, and a birth into life everlasting. Take courage now, for our good God furnishes us with so much fortitude, if we reach out with a humble heart to accept our ultimate destinies.



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Franciscans and the Protestant Revolution In England

Francis Borgia Steck, O.F.M.

CHAPTER V

RAGING OF THE STORM, 1534-1536

Franciscans continue to oppose the king's divorce and his usurped supremacy — Fr. Pecoock's sermon — First step toward the suppression of their province — Cromwell, vicegerent and vicar general — Hilsey and Browne, "grand visitors" of all mendicant friars — Their instructions — They visit the Franciscans at Richmond and Greenwich — Visitation. of Southampton — Loyalty of the friars — All Franciscans arrested and imprisoned — Their friaries in the hands of the king — Subsequent lot of the ejected friars — Some released from prison and banished — Many succumb to the hardships of prison life.

Despite the rigorous measures which Henry VIII had taken against them, the Franciscans at home and abroad were causing the crown much trouble and anxiety. Fr. Curson, vicar of Greenwich, exhorted Fr. Robinson of Richmond to hold a sermon at St. Paul's Cross in defense of their lawful queen. Furthermore, he publicly praised the heroism which Fr. Elstow

had recently manifested and supplied his needs during his imprisonment at Bedford.¹ Again, a certain Fr. John Laurence² informed Cromwell that two of his brethren, FF. Hugh Payn and Cornelius were providing the banished Fr. Peyto with books, and that, as he had reason to believe, they had also visited the queen at Buckden. Both friars were subsequently arrested and examined. Though no incriminating evidence could be found against them, the friars nevertheless declared themselves adherents of the queen; wherefore, Cromwell, reporting the matter to the king, asked leave to have them racked.³ One of the entries which Cromwell made in his *Remembrances* about this time is very significant. "To know," he writes, "whether Vaughan shall go forward or return. Touching Fr. Risby's examination of the letter sent by Peyto to Payn the friar. To remember to send for Friar Rich to Richmond, of the letters lately come from Rome to the minister of the Friars

1. 1 Hope, *The First Divorce of Henry VIII*, p. 278.

2 He was a priest and apparently an accomplice of Fr. Lyst, who commends him to Cromwell, calling him Father Larans. See *infra* (John Forest, note 15).

3 Stone, *Faithful Unto Death*, p. 19; see also Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*, Vol. I, p. 166.

Observants, and of the communication between Beeke and a friar, and to know the effect of those letters, which letters were directed from Elstow. To know what way the king will take with all the said malefactors.” The above-mentioned Stephen Vaughan was one of the spies whom Cromwell had sent abroad to gather information. On August 3, 1533, he wrote to Cromwell that Fr. Peyto, who was staying in the Franciscan friary at Antwerp, had just published a book against the king’s divorce, that he was visited every week by a friar from England, and that his friends in England were giving him pecuniary assistance. Later, on October 21, he again wrote, saying that “Peyto like his brethren is a hypocrite, a tiger clad in sheepskin, a perilous knave, and evil reporter of the king, and ought to be shamefully punished. Would to God,” he adds, “I could get him by any policy. I will work what I can. Whatever Peyto does, I will find means for the king to know. I have laid a bait for him. He cannot wear the cloaks and cowls sent over to him from England, they are so many.”⁴

Equally bold and unyielding were the Franciscans when, early in the spring of 1534, the matter of royal supremacy came to a head. Two of their number, as we have seen, were among the first to suffer martyrdom for opposing it. “Of the whole body of the clergy,” Gasquet observes, “none withstood

the policy of Henry with greater fearlessness and pertinacity of purpose than the Franciscan Observants.”⁵ On the very eve of Henry’s rupture with Rome, on Passion Sunday, March 22, 1534, Fr. Pecoock, guardian of the friary at Southampton, preached in St. Swinthin’s cathedral at Winchester. Though fully realizing the terrible consequences for himself as well as for his brethren, the bold friar openly defended the rights of the Pope. He exhorted his hearers to imitate the example of St. Maurice, who suffered martyrdom rather than offend God by executing the unjust demands of the prince. “Here are many hearers,” he said, “and they not all of one capacity. Some there be that understand me and some peradventure that understand me not, but otherwise do take me and shall report me, that I do speak my mind.” Then, after lamenting the diversity of opinions then agitating and misleading the public, he warned his hearers against certain books that had of late been published to further the cause of the king. Taking up a volume, he read a number of authorities to prove that, according to the teaching and institution of Christ, the Pope alone, as successor of St. Peter in the see of Rome, had supreme jurisdiction in the Church. One of Cromwell’s spies happened to be present in the church, and, on April 7, reported the matter to his master. In due time, the mayor of

⁵ Gasquet, *Henry VIII . . . Monasteries*, Vol. I, p. 155.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 33 seq.

Southampton received instructions to arrest Fr. Pecoock and to convey him to London. The valiant preacher was brought before Cromwell, but at the solicitation of friends he was permitted to return to his friary.⁶

That Henry VIII was determined to establish his usurped supremacy at any cost, became clear when, on April 20, 1534, the Holy Maid of Kent and her adherents were barbarously executed at Tyburn. By this time, he was fully convinced that he would find in the Franciscans his most formidable and influential opponents. Hence, when relations with Rome were severed and he was declared head of the Church in England, his first acts of tyranny were naturally directed against them and their friaries. So far, he had dealt only with individual members of their Order, apparently in the hope that sooner or later the others would submit. But now when he saw that neither the banishment of FF. Peyto and Elstow, nor the recent execution of FF. Risby and Rich had in any way intimidated their confreres, he became enraged and, urged on by Cromwell and his clique, decided on a campaign of general persecution against his one-time friends and favorites.

Henry's first act as head of the Church in England was to vest his zealous minister Thomas Cromwell with unlimited powers in matters spiritual.

6 Ibidem, pp. 169 seq. ; see also Stone, *Faithful Unto Death*, pp. 31

The crafty and unscrupulous politician was appointed vicegerent and vicar general of the realm with authority to preside over the meetings of the clergy. Wholly subservient to his royal master, he left nothing undone to further "the godly reformation and redress of errors, heresies and abuses in the said church."⁷ To this end, John Hilsey, a Dominican, and Dr. George Browne, a prior of the Augustinian hermits, were made superiors general and "grand visitors" of all the friaries belonging to the mendicant Orders.⁸ "Their instructions were precise and intended to gauge the feeling of the friars very thoroughly. The members of every convent or friary in England were to be assembled in their chapter houses and examined separately concerning their faith and obedience to Henry. The oath of allegiance to Anne Boleyn was to be administered to them, and they were bound to swear solemnly that they would preach and persuade the people to accept the royal supremacy, to confess that the Bishop of Rome had no more power than any other bishop and to call him Pope no longer. Further, the sermons of each preacher were to be carefully examined, and if not orthodox they

7 Lingard, *History of England*, Vol. V, p. 25.

8 Both these traitors subsequently received from the king their thirty pieces of silver" in the shape of bishoprics. John Hilsey, after the martyrdom of Blessed John Fisher, was raised to the see of Rochester; while George Browne became Archbishop of Dublin.

were to be burned. Every friar was to be strictly enjoined to commend the king as head of the Church, the queen, the archbishop of Canterbury and the clergy to the prayers of the faithful. Lastly, each house was 'to be obliged to show its gold, silver, and other movable goods, and deliver an inventory of them,' and to take a common oath, sealed with the convent seal, to observe the above orders."⁹

This general visitation of all the English friaries began in the spring of 1534. The Franciscans had, indeed, little mercy to expect from these visitors, and less from the enraged king and his minister. Their two convents at Greenwich and Richmond had already shown themselves most unrelenting in their opposition to the king's lawless policy. Hence they became the first objects of his wrath and vengeance. Rowland Lee¹⁰ and Thomas Bedyll were commissioned to visit them and to propose the prescribed articles. Shortly after the execution of the two guardians, FF. Rich and Risby, Cromwell received word from the visitors that together with the Carthusians of Sheen who had now taken the required oaths, they were employing every means to win over the neighboring Franciscans of Richmond; that so far, however, they had met with little success,

9 Gasquet, *Henry VIII ... Monasteries*, Vol. I, pp. 173 seq.

10 The same who officiated at Henry's secret marriage with Anne Boleyn.

although several conferences had been held with the friars. Finally, on June 13, Dr. George Browne informed Lee and Bedyll to bring the matter regarding the friaries of Richmond and Greenwich to a speedy issue. How shrewdly the royal visitors proceeded and how resolutely the friars defended the rights of the Holy See, has been handed down in a letter which Cromwell received from the two commissioners after the visitation.¹¹

Saturday night, June 13, between ten and eleven o'clock, Lee and Bedyll arrived at the friary of Richmond. On the following morning, they opened legal proceedings with the superior and one of the senior friars, Sebastian by name. Thereupon, they assembled the community and tried their utmost to make them subscribe to the articles. But the friars "showed themselves very untoward in that behalf." Wherefore, the cunning visitors resorted to a trick. They proposed that the four discreets or councillors of the friary be empowered by the rest to decide and act in the name of all and to come the next morning to the Greenwich friary with the official convent seal. To this the unsuspecting brethren agreed. Elated over their success, the commissioners departed.

On the following day, visitation was

11 For a copy of this letter see Wright, *Suppression of the Monasteries*, pp. 41 seq. It is on this letter that the subsequent account is based.

held in the Greenwich friary. Here, too, the members of the community were one in their opposition to the king's demands. Accordingly, the visitors advised them "to put the whole matter in the hands of the seniors or discreets," as their brethren at Richmond had done. The royal agents later informed Cromwell that they did this "to avoid superfluous words and idle reasoning, and especially to provide that if the discreets should refuse to consent, it were better after our minds to strain a few than a multitude." But the friars saw the trap and with one voice refused to entrust the affair to the four discreets. The proposed articles, they rightly maintained, concerned each member of the community personally, and each would take the salvation of his soul into his own hands. The friars, therefore, appeared individually before the royal commissioners, who employed every means short of torture to make them submit to the king's demands. But they soon perceived that they were dealing with men who knew their duty and who were determined to fulfill it at all hazards. Neither threats nor promises could shake their constancy, especially with regard to the usurped spiritual supremacy of the king. The royal visitors were forced to admit that they "found them in one mind of contradiction and dissent from the said articles, but specially against this article: That the Bishop of Rome must be considered to possess no greater authority or

jurisdiction than any other individual bishop in England or elsewhere in their respective diocese." The valiant friars argued that not only the teaching of Christ but also the Franciscan Rule which they had vowed, bound them to loyalty to the Holy See. The wily visitors on their part averred that this commandment of their Rule did not bind the English Franciscans, because there were no members of the Order in England when St. Francis wrote the Rule; that, furthermore, the clause containing this commandment had been inserted in the Rule by ambitious friars, who hoped thereby to gain the favor of the Pope, and that finally by the law of God, which stood above every religious Rule, they owed obedience and allegiance to their king. Then, to back up their sophisms, they added that both archbishops of the kingdom, as also the bishops of London, Winchester, Durham, and Bath, with many learned prelates and famous clerics had already subscribed to the articles. But the fearless friars remained firm; what others in the realm had done in this all-important question was of no concern to them. In short, all the subtle reasoning of Lee and Bedyll "could not sink into their obstinate heads, and worn in custom of obedience to the Pope." Finally, the visitors departed, greatly vexed at the "obstinacy" of these men of God. "Sorry we be," they wrote to Cromwell, "we can not bring them to no better frame of mind and order in

this behalf, as our faithful mind was to do, for the accomplishment of the king's pleasure."

Of only one more friary is mention made as regards the royal visitation. When the king's agent, on July 15, came to the Franciscans at Southampton, the afore-mentioned guardian, Fr. Pecock, finding the official was not Dr. Hilsey, as he had reason to suppose, became suspicious and demanded the visitor's credentials. "Not knowing what to do," the guardian later wrote to Cromwell, "we desired him to show us his authority, and he showed us a letter to your mastership so ill-written that I could not read it plainly, under seal, as he said, of Dr. Hilsey; and knowing that he was a wise father and a good clerk we did not believe it, but begged him to show us the first writing again to see whether Dr. Hilsey had any power to substitute. This he refused, and so we would not let him proceed and he threatened us with the king's displeasure and yours"¹² Apparently, there are no further records to show how the royal visitors fared in the remaining Franciscan friaries. Still, from the subsequent proceedings against their inmates it is quite clear that these communities, too, steadfastly refused to put their name to the articles. Indeed, the one or the other of their number seems, at least temporarily, to have declared himself

willing to take the oath of allegiance. Thus, for instance, Bishop Tunstall wrote to Cromwell on November 13, commending to the king's mercy two Franciscans who had previously been expelled from the friary at Newark for adhering to the Pope and banished to Scotland, whence after suffering great hardships they had returned. These two friars were Thomas Danyell, professed at Canterbury, and Henry Bukkery, a lay brother not yet professed. "Surely," wrote Tunstall, "best it were to receive them to mercy, for other fault we cannot find in them, but their obstinacy to have cleaved heretofore to the Bishop of Rome, which now they will leave and forsake, as they say to us." Commenting on this incident, Stone says, "It was a sorry triumph for the king and Cromwell that of the whole Order, but two starved and hunted individuals could be brought, by all the machinery of persecution at their command, to falter an unwilling denial of the Pope's authority."¹³ Clearly, nothing short of death and destruction could silence these formidable champions of papal authority and jurisdiction, because "secluded from the commerce and pleasures of the world, they felt fewer temptations to sacrifice their consciences to the command of their sovereign; and seemed more eager to court the crown, than to flee from the pains of martyrdom."¹⁴

12 Gasquet, Henry VIII ... *Monasteries*, Vol. I, p. 177.

13 Stone, *Faithful Unto Death*, p. 43.

14 Lingard, Vol. V, p. 18.

Hence we can imagine the fury of the king and of Cromwell, when the reports of the commissioners reached them. Without delay, a decree was drawn up providing for the arrest of the Franciscans and the seizure of their friaries. What bitter pangs and gloomy forebodings must have preyed on the spirits of these men of God when the king's officers appeared at the various convents to carry out his orders. Their six houses were declared forfeited to the crown and were temporarily made over to the Augustinian Order. Of the friars themselves, whom the officers arrested as prisoners of the king, some were confined in other religious houses of the kingdom, while the majority were thrown into prison. On June 18, 1534, a certain Leonard Smith writing to Lord Lisle remarks incidentally, "No news but that two carts full of friars came to the Tower two days ago." And in a letter which Chapuys addressed to Emperor Charles V under date of August 11, 1534, we read: "Of seven (1) houses of Observants, five have already been emptied of friars, because they refused to swear to the statutes made against the Pope. Those in the two others expect also to be expelled."¹⁵ By August 29, 1534, fully a year before any other religious house was molested, the agents of Cromwell had finished with the Franciscans. Far and wide the helpless friars were scattered over the kingdom, while their lowly convents, which as centers

15 Stone, *Faithful Unto Death*, p. 38.

of virtue and learning enjoyed nation-wide esteem, were now in the hands of strangers.¹⁶

The total number of Franciscans thus turned out of their houses can not be fixed with any degree of certainty. It is estimated that two hundred were expelled. Of these a number were lodged with the Conventuals, who were forced to treat them as prisoners.¹⁷ "All the Observants of the kingdom," Chapuys writes, "have been driven from their monasteries for refusing the oath against the Holy See, and have been distributed in several monasteries, where they are locked up in chains, and worse treated than they could be in prison."¹⁸ It seems, however, that in some cases their confinement was less severe, and that a number of them succeeded in making good their escape, and either remained in hiding with friends or

16 Since the Franciscan friaries had little or no temporal goods, it was not greed but sheer hatred that prompted the *king* to suppress them.

17 It would be wide of the mark to infer from this that the Conventuals were eager abettors of the king's lawless measures against the Franciscans. They were rather compelled to treat them as the king's prisoners and perhaps were even exhorted thereto by the Franciscans themselves as the lesser of two evils. Furthermore, it is safe to say that the liberties which in time a number of the imprisoned friars enjoyed were to some extent owing either to the intervention of the Conventuals or to their unwillingness to do the king's full bidding.

18 Gasquet, *Henry VIII . . . Monasteries*, Vol. I, p. 189.

crossed over to Scotland and Belgium. Thus, early in July, FF. Hugh Payn and Thomas Hayfield, both of the Newark friary, made an attempt to flee to the continent. Disguised in secular dress, they got as far as Cardiff. Here they obtained passage on a ship bound for Brittany. They were about to embark when the king's men discovered their identity and led them off to prison. Dr. Hilsey, who arrived shortly after, had them conveyed to London. "You shall perceive more of their crafty fashion," he wrote to Cromwell. "In all places where they come they persuade the people to hold to the bishop of Rome, calling him Pope and saying that they will die in his cause and never forsake him while they live. They rail at the books set forth *cum privilegio*, calling them heresies, and heretics that set them forth." He also accused them of ridiculing the Princess Elizabeth, by saying she had been baptized in hot water, which, however, had not been hot enough for her.¹⁹

A letter written by Fr. Lybert to James Becky and dated October 25, 1534, gives us a glimpse into the condition of the imprisoned friars. The writer declares that he and Fr. Abraham are poorly lodged with the Grey Friars at Stamford. They are anxious to learn what their confreres at Greenwich have done or intend to do. "We hear," he writes, "that they are all sworn, and have somewhat changed their 19 Ibidem, pp. 180 seq.

government, at which we marvel.²⁰ Notwithstanding, if they think that God is pleased with it, their conscience discharged, the world edified, and any profit may come of it, we desire to have a more perfect knowledge; and then we shall do as God shall inspire us, either suffer pain still, and be enclosed, or else go at liberty, as they do." Then the troubled friar asks that a number of articles be sent him, which he had forgotten on his hurried departure, and wonders that his letter, written about six weeks before, had till now remained unanswered. In conclusion, he requests that his present writing be burnt and sends greetings to his brethren and to his relatives.²¹

More deplorable, of course, was the lot of those Franciscans who had been thrown into prison. Accustomed to the peace and quiet of convent life, they were now compelled to share company with the very dregs of humanity and were loaded down with every misery and hardship that these dreadful abodes of filth and disease could offer. For the time, Henry's anger knew no bounds; and there is every reason to believe that neither insults nor torture were spared to force the friars into submission. The following

20 Cromwell, we may readily suppose, had rumors of this kind published, in order to deceive and bewilder the other members of the province.

21 Stone, *Faithful Unto Death*, pp. 41 seq. Gasquet, *Henry VIII . . . Monasteries*, Vol. I, pp. 191 seq.

fact, related by Bouchier, Mason, Wadding, and other reliable historians, shows to some extent to what frightful sufferings these men of God were subjected. In 1537, after three years of hard durance, a number of Franciscans were released from their dungeons. Four of them, however, FF. Thomas Packingham, Bonaventure Roo, John Tuit, and Richard Carter, died a few days later. "The hardships they had undergone in their confinement," Parkinson explains, "had sunk them so low that they were not able to recover."²² The *Franciscan Martyrology* commemorates them on August 9.

The only one who ventured to intercede for the imprisoned friars was Sir Thomas Wriothesley, a member of the Privy Council. Personal contact with them had made him their friend and admirer. Being on intimate terms with Cromwell, he petitioned him to liberate the friars and give them leave to quit the country. Though the calculating minister was willing to get rid of them at any cost, the king proved less inclined to grant the request of Wriothesley. One thing alone had so far prevented him from sating his thirst for vengeance by sending the friars to the block. He knew that ever since his infamous dealings in the case of the Holy Maid of Kent, a strong feeling of dissatisfaction and indignation

had taken hold of the people, which became especially noticeable when the Franciscans were suppressed and imprisoned. Even at court there were such as resented his usurping of the spiritual supremacy and thought his proceedings against the friars too severe. Therefore, when Cromwell approached him with Wriothesley's petition, he found it safer to feign mercy and had a number of friars set at liberty.

Parkinson writes under the year 1537, "The execution of many of the Franciscan Observants (in prison ever since 1534, or 1535) having been delayed by the mediation of their friend Sir Thomas Wriothesley, and not one of them coming to the king's measures, or subscribing to his supremacy, etc., it was now proposed to his majesty (as Sanders writes) that they should be some way or other disposed of, lest others by their example, might become more resolute. And now, though the king seemed inclined to have them all cut off, or hanged at once, yet being apprehensive of the infamy of such a fact, because they were numerous, and being willing to show some favor to the Privy Counsellor Wriothesley, who had pleaded hard for them, he spared some of them, who went into banishment, partly into the Low Countries, and others into Scotland."²³ To this action of Henry probably refers Cromwell's

²² Parkinson, *Antiquities of the English Franciscans*, p. 238.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 238.

entry in his *Remembrances*: “Item to remember the friars of Greenwich to have license to go to Ireland.”²⁴

Not all Franciscans, however, were set at liberty. Many had to languish in prison often for years, until death put an end to their sufferings. From the moment they were shut up in the silence and gloom of their foul dungeon, nothing more was heard of them. It is quite probable that some were executed in secret, and that in consequence no account of their martyrdom has ever been committed to writing.

From a *Contemporary Account of Bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More* preserved in the Vatican, we learn that “an immense number of them all perished either on the scaffold or by starvation or through their sufferings in prison.”²⁵ Parkinson informs us that “thirty-two of the same Order were removed out of the prisons of London, and being coupled two and two together with iron chains, were sent into divers other prisons of the nation, that they might perish with less murmuring and disturbance of the people; for as the author of the *Franciscan Martyrology* says, there was such an universal discontent amongst the king’s subjects, and such loud outcries, even of persons

of quality, on the account of the imprisonment of all the Observants, that his majesty thought fit to set some of them at liberty, and that these 32 were reserved to be made examples of. Besides these, others were starved with hunger, as an author writes,²⁶ and others suffocated with the intolerable stench of loathsome prisons, or perished by the inconveniences and hardships of their confinement.”²⁷ Hueber, in his *Menologium*, mentions, for September 24, thirty-four friars who died about the year 1537. And finally, on July 31, the *Franciscan Martyrology* of Arturus commemorates thirty-two friars “who, imprisoned by Henry VIII for the Catholic faith and conveyed, burdened two and two with most heavy chains, to different places, died in the Lord, after having been tortured with hunger and cold and subjected to other sufferings and hardships.”

26 The author referred to is Fr. Francis Davenport, who flourished in the beginning of the next century and played a prominent part in the founding of the second English province.

27 Parkinson, p. 238.



24 Gasquet, *Henry . . . Monasteries*, Vol. I, p. 190.

25 Pocock, *Records of the Reformation*, Vol. II, pp. 553 seq.

The Way of the Cross

Bishop Giles OFM

The Way of the Cross has the capacity to open our hearts and minds to many spiritual realities that otherwise would remain hidden. There are many things that may confound us about the Faith. The humble meditation of Christ's suffering gives us grace and sheds light for our understanding. We learn more clearly God's love for us and the necessity of suffering. Also, there are many things that we may have never considered that begin gradually to reveal themselves to us as we continue in the contemplation of the Passion. The greatest doctors and theologians tell us that their insight and wisdom came from meditating upon Christ crucified. (St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, etc.) St. Francis of Assisi contemplated and loved Jesus crucified to such an extent that he was given the miraculous grace to bear the physical wounds of Our Lord in his own body.

We have met many who claim that they know their faith. Our standard reply is that they may know "their" faith, but they do not know "The" Faith. If they

knew the Faith, they would never be so bold as to claim that they need no further instruction. One of the first lessons that we must learn is that no matter how long we may live, or howsoever long we may study, there is always something more for us to discover or improve upon. According to St. Augustine, religion is a realignment of our lives with God's. As God is infinite and we are finite, there is always something more for us to do. We can always grow in grace, and draw nearer to Our Lord's heart in Charity. Our re-alignment (religion) can always be made more perfect, this side of eternity. The perfection of our re-alignment and union with Christ is wonderfully advanced as we follow Jesus to The Cross. The closer we follow Him here, the more perfect becomes our love and understanding of all that we hear and read of The Faith elsewhere.

The Life of Christ was spent for us so that we may learn the way to God. We have all been called to follow Christ – especially the suffering and ending of Christ's life on Calvary. There is much

for us to learn in the life of example, words, and teachings of Our Lord, but this in the grand scheme of things is small compared to the intense and profound lessons that He teaches us in His Passion.

We live in a world obsessed with the need for instantaneous gratification of our desires. If we want a crash course in the True Religion and Faith we will find it in the Way of the Cross. The immense love of God is brought forth to us in the grandest and most moving of ways. We learn the true meaning of love. "Greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15, 13) We are inspired to imitate this love by offering our own sufferings with His. We learn to not fear the crosses and sufferings of this life. We even begin to realize and experience the truth of His promise. He will make our cross light and sweet. "Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light." (Matthew 11, 29-30) In the light of these graces granted us in contemplating the Mysteries of the Way of the Cross, we even

begin to desire to be able to suffer more in this life. In this way we hope to draw closer to God.

The world often looks upon this devotion and practice as being morose. It is just the opposite. There is to be found in these mysteries great consolation. We are given an understanding of the necessity of our own plight in life. We begin to perceive a purpose and a greater goal for our being. All that spiritually confounds and baffles the world is understood and loved by the followers of the Cross. The beauty and wonder of Divine Providence in turning all the evils into much greater goods takes the bitterness and sting out of all our pains and tribulations.

The Way of the Cross also instructs us in the degree of evil in sin. Sin is such an evil that the only reparation that could be made was the complete sacrifice of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Man was incapable of making satisfaction on his own. His offence was against an infinite and all holy God. This demanded an infinite and all Holy Sacrifice. Man is neither infinite nor all holy; hence he is incapable of making reparation on his own. It is for this that God became man

and suffered for us. He took our punishment upon Himself.

There are several approved methods, prayers, and meditations to guide us from station to station and they are filled with precious gems of devotion. There is something for everyone: from the youngest to the oldest; from the most ignorant to the wisest; man or woman; husband or wife; parent or child.

Those with a strong devotion to Mary will find they cannot spend too much time at the Fourth Station. As they contemplate the meeting of Mary and Jesus on this journey to Calvary. There are no words capable of expressing the intense sorrow and pain in those two Hearts that loved each other so tenderly. What pain there is in Mary's heart as she is united as one with God's Heart! At the same time, we cannot express the joy in fulfilling the Will of God; the joy that the Gates of Heaven will be opened. God's faithful children will now be able to come to Him in Heaven. The delight of God to be with the sons of men is about to be made possible once again. Mary and Jesus must have seen this in each other's eyes as well as the pain and suffering. There was a purpose for all this and

God is making it known to us through them.

The weak who have repeatedly fallen find the encouragement to keep getting up and trying again as they contemplate each of Christ's falls on the way to Golgotha. Each of His falls offers us a reason to hope and to build up courage, with His grace, to rise up and strive with greater fervor and effort. It is not our falling that we should focus upon, but rather the getting up and continuing right up to the very last.

Those who have fallen to the temptations of the flesh wince at the Tenth Station as Jesus is stripped of His garments. They behold the shame, humiliation, and pain He endured as the garments that stuck to His open wounds were callously torn off, reopening them all again. They see clearly what their own sins have done. With shame they are brought to confess and repent of their crimes of the flesh.

These are just a few of the countless thoughts that God gives to those who devoutly follow Him in prayer and spirit along this Way. In our world today, this devotion is needed more than ever. Our people are

Franciscan Saints

MARCH 26

BLESSED DIDACUS JOSEPH

Confessor, First Order

This humble Capuchin, who could make no progress at school, this “dunce of Cadix,” was later on admired by the world as the savior of the Faith in Spain, as a second Paul, as the apostle of his century. His lineage dated from the Visigoth kings. After he had taken the habit of St. Francis with the Capuchins in Seville, had been ordained to the priesthood, and had prepared himself by a holy life, he was appointed to the task of preaching.

Everybody marveled at the singular power and unction of his words, which swayed his audiences and left an impression on their lives. But most astonished of all was the venerable Dominican, Antonio Querero, a fellow student of Didacus, who knew how difficult study had been for him. A child, however, solved the problem one day during a sermon, when he shouted aloud in the church: “Mother, mother, see the dove resting on the shoulder of Father Didacus! I could preach like that too if a dove told me all that I should say!”

And there was the secret. Because

of his humility and virtue, the Holy Spirit had converted this unlearned man into the most celebrated preacher in Spain. But how Father Didacus prayed before his sermons! How he scourged himself even unto blood, in order to draw down God’s mercy upon the people!

Once when his superior chided him because of the austerity of his life, the saint replied: “Ah, Father, my sins and the sins of the people compel me to do it. Those who have been charged with the conversion of sinners must remember that the Lord has imposed upon them the sins of all their clients. By means of our penances we should atone for the sins of our fellowmen and thus preserve ourselves and them from eternal death. It would hardly be too much if we shed the last drop of our blood for their conversion.”

In this disposition he journeyed through all Spain and infused new Catholic life wherever he went. In a very pronounced way he preached the praise of the most Holy Trinity and of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Honors did not escape him. He was appointed extraordinary consultor of the Church, synodal examiner in almost all the Spanish dioceses, honorary canon, and honorary doctor of several universities. He died in 1801, in the fifty-eighth year of his highly blessed life, and was beatified by Pope Leo XIII.

ON THE NECESSITY OF PENANCE

1. Consider the rigorous penance of Blessed Didacus. We do not need, nor are we permitted to imitate him in it. But it would be well if we strove to cultivate the spirit which prompted him to undertake it. Not without reason does the holy council of Trent explain: "The whole life of a Christian should be one continuous act of penance." We are sinners, and the first requisite of true penance is the acknowledgment and confession of our sinfulness and hearty sorrow for our offenses. — Do you possess at least this kind of contrition?

2. Consider the admonition of our Lord: "Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5), that is to say, by sudden death. Our Lord spoke these words after it had been reported to Him that a number of

persons had died a sudden death. But who is there who would care to be surprised in his sins by sudden death? Let us, therefore, heed that other word also: "Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Hebr. 3:8). — Should you not long ago have followed the call to penance?

3. Consider penance as atonement for the sins of others. What fruitful penance Blessed Didacus took upon himself in order to atone for the sins of the people. Hence, his sermons produced "fruits worthy of penance" (Luke 3:8). He who seriously considers how frequently our good God is offended every day, will count it as a sweet obligation to impose small mortifications upon himself by way of atonement. — Have you ever thought of doing that? On Fridays? During Lent? During the Ember weeks?

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O God, who didst endow Thy blessed confessor, Didacus, with the science of the saints and didst work wonders through him for the salvation of his people, grant us through his intercession to think those things that are right and just, so that we may arrive safely at the kingdom of Thy glory. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Restoring Our Catholic Culture

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

Some will ask why we should be concerned with restoring or re-establishing a Catholic culture anywhere in the world. They will undoubtedly provide you with all of the dooms-day or end times prophecies you will ever want. One must understand, though, this is not necessarily about how successful we will be, but making an honest effort to do so.

The reason for such an effort is quite simple. Either we are willing to help preach the Holy Gospels and spread the Faith, or simply capitulate and like the Modernists, who no longer are concerned with seeking conversions and re-establishing a true Christian Culture. In other words, do we wish to obey the command of Our Lord in converting the world to Catholicism, or is it no longer relevant?

The history of the Church in numerous regions of the world has demonstrated that neither time nor circumstance has deterred the clergy or faithful from at least making a concerted effort. Sixteenth century England and twentieth century Russia and China are two good examples.

What is necessary to establish a Catholic Culture? I'll admit before

I begin those things which follow are indeed a "wish" list. Many of the points, though, did exist in the past with good results.

The first requirement would be the proper recognition of the Blessed Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Roman Catholic Faith in society. This means the different levels of government must recognize and publicly acknowledge these eternal and essential truths. A most important element is the recognition of Christ the King and His Kingship throughout the concerned nation and the world.

The second important requirement is to allow the Roman Catholic Church to freely and openly do its work of spreading the Gospels and converting souls. This would include to properly guide the government on all moral issues. In this society the error of separation of Church and State would absolutely not be tolerated.

All public officials, whether elected or appointed, must take an oath (by which they would strictly be held) to uphold all points of correct ethics and justice and work for the common good of all. Lobbyists and special interests would NOT exist. Anyone found guilty of knowingly

breaking this oath would be removed from office. The offices would begin with the president (head of state) and extend to the local mayor or city councils. An exception to such a law would be a Catholic King who was anointed by the True Vicar of Christ (the Pope) or his representative. In such a case, checks and balances would be established within the government to prevent abuses.

All official public gatherings would begin with a prayer which recognizes the Blessed Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Catholic Church as the moral guide of all civil laws. The desire for correct and objective justice would be repeated. Term limits would exist among all elected officials, primarily to prevent corruption.

Religious processions would replace the pagan and Masonic parades. Open and public religious processions on Holy days and major feast days would be a constant reminder of our societal obligation to adore the One True God.

Any bill signed into law must be a moral law. Present-day laws such as allowing abortions or so-called “same-sex marriages” would not be allowed. In fact, all such errors and sins would be strictly forbidden. Any woman attempting an abortion would

be jailed. The doctors and staff would be imprisoned. All artificial contraceptives would be illegal. Any homosexual promoting their “cause” in any manner, would be imprisoned in a special prison so as not to infect others. The worst of the offenders would be put to death.

There would be only a few government programs to help those in need, and these would be rare exceptions. Welfare, food stamps and social security would not exist. As in the past, the churches would perform most all works of charity. They would help the poor and unemployed while in need and work to find employment for all. Generational welfare and unemployment would simply NOT exist.

A simple tax, such as a flat or fair tax would be the means by which the government would carry out its operations. Once having ended all “entitlement” programs and foreign aid (humanitarian aid being the exception), there would be plenty of money for all “essential” national programs and functions. A simple one-page tax form would suffice for homes and businesses. The tyrannical Internal Revenue Service would not exist.

All banks would be local or regional. National banks would be illegal. If you’re wondering why

national banks would be illegal, simply look at the power and corruption that has occurred in recent years. The central banking system (the Federal Reserve System) would be forbidden. Usury would also be strictly forbidden. The credit system as we know it today would not exist. It is obvious to any honest and educated person that it is a recipe for the financial ruin of a nation. If we don't learn from past mistakes, we'll soon repeat them.

The long history of banking has shown that with few exceptions, Jews are not to be allowed in the banking industry. The abuses of usury and controlling entire nations and continents by those in power have proven they are not to be trusted.

Freemasonry and all secret societies would be forbidden. Any Freemason or member of such a group (which would necessarily be located outside the country) attempting to establish such a group or in any way attempting to undermine the Church or State would receive the death penalty. Considering the revolutions the Masons carried out and the damaged they caused, once having been found guilty in a just trial, there would be little room for mercy.

Sunday would once again become

a sacred day. With few exceptions businesses would not be allowed to be open. For those of you old enough to remember the "blue laws" where stores were not allowed to be open, or those such as pharmacies could open only for a few hours to provide necessary medicines, these laws need to be brought back.

All other businesses, including restaurants and most gas stations need to be closed. Medical facilities such as hospitals and nursing facilities need to function continuously in order to properly care for the sick. In fact, it would be preferable to have the religious communities operate them and in doing so reduce the cost of medical care.

There would be no professional or amateur sports games on Sunday. If they can't play on the other six days of the week, they don't need to exist. This has become an increasing problem as the sacredness of Sunday is rarely considered today. There would be no "excuse" of it being innocent entertainment for Sunday. **The devilish schemes of the Judeo-Masonic crowds to destroy Sunday would not be allowed, and if attempted, would be publicly exposed.**

To be Continued

Our Best Friend

TRANSLATED BY BERNARD A. HAUSMANN, S.J.

FROM THE GERMAN BY CHRISTIAN PESCH, S.J.

CHAPTER XI

A Profound Friend

“God grant that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts, that you may be able to comprehend what is the depth of Christ” (cf. Eph. 3:16 ff.).

1. *The frankness of Jesus Christ.* Jesus is a unique friend because of His unparalleled frankness and unfathomable depth. Frankness and depth are essential characteristics of every noble friendship. No man takes an uncommunicative, unapproachable, reserved individual for a friend. Friendship is essentially a spiritual union. Yet frankness must not be shallow. There are men whose interior is entirely laid bare after a short acquaintance. They do not make it a point to keep any secrets for themselves. Since they have no spiritual treasures to guard, their heart is on their tongue and they manifest all their thoughts, desires, and ambitions. No one values such shallow individuals. Since a

friend communicates his interior to his friend, prudent men will be loath to extend their friendship to one whose chief occupation is to publish from the housetops what has been confided to him. Moreover, men seek in their friend the complement for their own insufficiencies — at least ordinarily. But what can anyone find in a superficial, diffusive individual? Poor in spiritual goods, he squanders even the little he possesses. On the other hand, it is one of the keenest joys of friendship to find in our friend ever new treasures of spiritual wealth: beautiful thoughts, accurate judgments, noble tendencies, delicate consideration, lofty ambitions, firmness of character, and ever new proofs of changeless fidelity. The more vivid the conviction that every deeper insight into the soul life of our friend will disclose new riches to our wondering eyes, the more glorious is our friendship.

Possibly such a friend as we have just described is the unrealized

ideal of a human friend, but it is literally true as a description of our Friend, Jesus. He stands before us in luminous clarity. We know accurately what a treasure we have in Him. He has revealed this to us and proposes it for our belief as an article of faith through the Catholic Church.

Our Saviour is as truly man as we are ourselves, and nothing human has remained foreign to Him, sin alone excepted. He knows from His own personal experience all the miseries to which we are heir, the interior and exterior sufferings to which we are subject, and even death itself. He possesses a sympathetic, sensitively human heart, and was not ashamed to shed tears of compassion at the sufferings of His fellow men. His mission was to console the suffering, to aid them in their troubles, nay, eventually to free His friends from all suffering and to make them share unspeakable, eternal bliss in His company. He is "The man Christ Jesus," as the Apostle calls Him (I Tim. 2:5), or "The Son of Man," as our Saviour was wont to designate Himself, a man of our race and the best of our race.

But He is at the same time the

eternal Son of God, who says of Himself: "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father" (Mt. 11:27), and "that which My Father hath given Me, is greater than all," it is the divine nature; "I and the Father are One" (Jn. 10:29, 30). And St. Paul says that He "is over all things, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5). He appeared in our midst as man in order to establish the kingdom of God, but not the earthly kingdom expected by the Jews. It is not a kingdom of which one may say: "Here it is or there (cf. Lk. 17:21), this mountain chain or this river bound it;" but it is a kingdom of holiness and justice, and its end is heaven. The way to this end is narrow and rough; it is the way of the observance of the commandments, of self-denial, of unwearied carrying of the cross, of readiness to sacrifice even life itself to attain the end (cf. Lk. 14:26, 27, 33).

Also in this regard our Saviour deals with us with perfect candor. He has concealed none of the difficulties necessarily connected with His service. And if we are faithless in His service despite our desire to be one of His disciples, He warns us through the voice of our conscience and does not desist

until we listen to His warning or separate ourselves entirely from Him (cf. Jn. 6:68). He is the light of the world; His person is the light, His doctrine is the light, His moral precepts are the light. As regards all the things that we must believe and do to attain salvation, He has given us the clearest instruction. There is no trace of reserve or fraud in Him. Hence, He can call all of us one day before His judgment seat, because we have not even the semblance of an excuse that He did not deal openly and honestly with us. "All that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they who have done good shall come forth unto resurrection of life; but they who have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (Jn. 5:28, 29) Such is the frank attitude of our Saviour in our regard.

2. *Our Saviour, however, is also a friend of unfathomable depth.* It must be so; for since He is to be our Friend for all eternity, we should someday exhaust His wealth if it were not inexhaustible; we should then be unable to find new treasures in Him, and indifference would succeed to affection and

enthusiasm. Eternal friendship — eternal in the strict sense of the word — demands an infinite depth of spiritual treasure in our friend. Since in heaven God's riches become to a certain extent the property of each of the blessed, all the inhabitants of heaven possess within themselves a treasure which only God can perfectly comprehend and value. However deeply one of the blessed may delve into the soul of the other, he can never plumb the bottom, because he invariably reaches the reflection of the Divinity which he cannot fathom. But the unfathomable abyss of perfection of our divine Saviour is incomparably greater than that of all the saints, because all possible modes of union with the Divinity possessed by the saints are found in a far higher degree in Him, and because He is a divine person, which cannot be said of any saint.

We shall realize only in heaven the entire depth of this unfathomable abyss of perfection when we shall see our Saviour as He is (cf. 1 Jn. 3:2). We shall see Him in His human and divine nature. We shall come to know all the privileges of grace accorded His humanity; His surpassing knowledge and

wisdom, His boundless love of God and man, His absolute justice in all His commands and judgments, His stainless sanctity, His omnipotence, and despite His greatness, His condescension toward men, whom He recognizes as brothers and as members of His mystical body. When we shall be enraptured by this undreamed of beauty and shall see and admire in His created perfection the embodiment of the exemplar of man, we are still only at the threshold of the fathomless depth of perfection. For the created perfections of Christ do not constitute the real object of the beatific vision. That object is the Divinity Itself, which has assumed the human nature of Christ. We would not see our Lord as He is if we did not see also His Divinity; we shall see it unveiled as it is; we shall see and marvel; we shall marvel and love; we shall love, and all the yearnings of our soul will be satisfied; we shall have our fill and still always hunger anew, because we cannot exhaust the infinite. We shall be submerged in a bottomless sea, not to perish in it, but to find there the eternal strength and joy of life. It is the primeval sea of spiritual light

for whose perception the soul will be endowed with a special power which, in the language of the Church, is called the "light of glory." By sinking into this infinite sea of light, the blissful rapture of the first moment of beatitude is renewed each moment and maintained at its original vigor. And for all the aeons of eternity this rapture will never lose its power to charm, never dull the edge of our desires. Thus, the two seemingly contradictory promises of Holy Writ will be verified: "They that eat Me, shall yet hunger: and they that drink Me, shall yet thirst" (Ecclus. 24:29), and: "He who comes to Me shall not hunger: and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (Jn. 6:35). Our Saviour Himself explains the paradox: "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever." And why shall he not thirst? Because "the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up unto life everlasting" (Jn. 4:13, 14). O this blessed thirst, which is always satisfied! O this blessed drinking, which continually stimulates the thirst to drink yet more of the fountain of light and life! How perfectly all the

desires of our heart for happiness will be satisfied by this eternally refreshing draught.

But as long as we are detained here below “it has not yet appeared what we shall be” (1 Jn. 3:2). Only death will perfectly unite us with the object of our longings. Therefore, let us say with the Apostle: “For to me, to live is Christ: and to die is gain; . . . desiring to depart and to be with Christ, a lot by far the better” (Phil. 1:21, 23).

Yet our Saviour would not be the loving Friend He is if, during our pilgrimage here below, He denied us all consolation at the source of our beatitude. Even in this life those words are verified: “If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink” (Jn. 7:37). Thousands have drunk at this fountain and acknowledged with St. Paul: By Christ doth our comfort abound” (2 Cor. 1:5). So full of this comfort was the Apostle that he deemed it a great grace to be permitted to preach everywhere “the unfathomable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8).

But, of course, we must thirst after Christ if our yearnings for happiness are to be satisfied by Him. We must bring Him a

heart empty of inordinate love of earth so that the treasures of His heavenly love may find room in it. We must not appear before Him with narrow hearts, but must enlarge them with love, desire, confidence, so that our Saviour may fill them. Then we shall experience more and more how exhaustless and beatific the riches of His heart are. A single ray of grace from this heart can fully compensate us for all the efforts, sufferings, sacrifices which service of the Saviour entails. However, words are inadequate, only experience can teach us. The faithful servants of Christ experience delights for which human language has no words, “secret words,” St. Paul calls them (2 Cor. 12:4). But one thing the Apostle does tell us: “For the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord . . . I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them as dung, that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8).

Many great saints have cherished the same sentiments and enjoyed the same experiences. Precisely because of these experiences, they could no longer understand how anyone could love anything but Christ. Far from growing weary of the charm of the knowledge of Christ, they

adjoined heaven and earth not to disturb them in the enjoyment of this delight. Do not the writings in which the saints attempted to describe this experience, the writings of a Catherine of Siena, a Teresa, a Blessed Henry Suso, and many others breathe forth a luminous atmosphere of supernatural happiness which reminds us of the eternal light of heaven which shall one day, we hope, be also our Portion? One who has not lost all taste for pure, spiritual, true happiness must conceive the desire to be permitted to taste a little of this happiness here below.

3. *It is possible for all, each after his own fashion, to experience the joy of sounding the fathomless treasures of our Saviour.* The ecstasies of the great saints are extraordinary graces which are not accorded to all Christians, not even to all the saints. The omnipotence of God can, of course, from stones raise up children to Abraham (cf. Mt. 3:9), can transform the persecutor of the Church, Saul, into a St. Paul (cf. Acts 9:1-30). It can, therefore, bestow on every Christian the grace of the highest contemplation. But in His ordinary providence

God proportions His graces to the endowments, the occupations, the inclinations of the individual. By far the greater number of men are called not to the contemplative but to the active life, either to mental or physical labor. Therefore, it would not be expedient for God to bestow on a soul called to the active life supernatural gifts which would interfere with its external activity. There may be circumstances in which the saints of God lead a double life, and, despite continued contemplation, discharge their external duties unimpeded; but such cases are miraculous and therefore extraordinary. Ordinarily, God does not conduct the souls He has chosen for the active life on the paths of lofty contemplation; for contemplation is not a necessary means or measure of holiness.

On the other hand, friendship with our Saviour, knowledge of Him, confidential dealings with Him, exploration of the sanctuary of His heart, pleasure at and participation in His exhaustless treasures, everything, in short, that devotion to the Sacred Heart offers us, is a path open to all and on which all of good will can walk. Offer all your works,

then, to our Saviour as a return for His love and in reparation for the ingratitude and insults with which so many men reward His love; be on your guard against increasing the accumulation of human ingratitude by deliberate sin. Glance at times at the picture of the Sacred Heart with the eyes of the body if possible, or, at least, with those of the soul. Permit the flames of love which arise from this heart to enkindle a return of love in your own. If a cross presses down on your shoulders, look up to the cross which surmounts this heart and draw courage from it to carry yours courageously in the Saviour's foot steps. If your heart is wounded by neglect and calumny, gaze at the crown of thorns that surrounds this divine heart, a crown of shame which our Saviour bore for our sakes. Do, not forget the gaping wound inflicted on the heart of the Lord; enter there in spirit in the

hour of temptation, and say: "O Jesus, within Thy wounds hide me. From the wicked foe defend me."

Here we have a familiarity with Jesus which all may practice, and through which all may participate in the treasures of His heart. Be convinced that, if you earnestly and perseveringly deal thus with the Saviour, you will be walking on a safe way. The words of our Saviour will be verified: "And many that are last shall be first" (cf. Mt. 19:30). Many, who passed through this life unnoticed will be among the first in heaven, because of the treasures of holiness which they merited in simplicity, fidelity, and perseverance. This also is one of the unfathomable mysteries of the heart of our divine Lord, that so many apparently insignificant souls are numbered among His best friends.



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