

# THE SERAPH

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# Personal Revelations

There appear to be many who believe that we must have current revelation from God so that we may be able to discern the correct faith or at least His Divine Will for each of us.

The Catholic Church, because She insists upon physical Apostolic succession and an undying faithfulness to the truths revealed to the Apostles from Christ, has been labeled as un-trustworthy. Apparently, there are many Protestant sects that claim present and direct revelation from God on a regular if not daily basis. This concept was recently brought to my attention in a letter addressed to the editor. In order for the Catholic faith to be acceptable we must show direct revelations from God, rather than lay emphasis upon valid and licit physical succession as bishops.

In responding to this position, we must first consider that the Catholic Church is the only Church that can trace a direct physical connection to Jesus Christ. All the various Protestant sects date their beginnings from someone else who appeared at a much later date.

The Catholic Church holds and has held from the beginning that all public revelation ceased with the death of St. John the Apostle. All that God wished to tell us He revealed to the Apostles and they have transmitted this onto their successors in an unbroken line to the present day. The Sacred Scriptures are actually a secondary source of revelation. The Gospels were not written down until many years later. The original Gospels were transmitted orally from one person to the next and from one generation to the next until they were finally written down. It is the Catholic Church that studied all the texts, codified them and determined which texts were canonical and which ones were apocryphal. All the various Protestant sects owe their ability to use the Bible to the Catholic Church from which they have broken away. If it were not for the Catholic Church they would not have a Bible. This is not just a matter of opinion, but is a certain historical fact.

There are many Charismatics both Protestant and Neo-Protestant (Novus Ordo) that claim a direct connection to God.

They are often seen babbling away in nonsense claiming to be speaking in tongues, and/or fainting in the heat of their emotional enthusiasm claiming this as being slain in the “spirit.”

The Mormon Church (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) claims that Joseph Smith received a revelation instructing him and those who follow him in an unheard of people that received an unheard of revelation from an unrecorded visit of Jesus to the Americas. This religion has a parallel text to the Bible, written down by Joseph Smith.

The Catholic Church has never declared that there could not be any more communication from God to man; on the contrary, She insists that there are many. There are many approved apparitions; there are many saints who have received various helps and aids from personal revelations. While it is not necessary that we accept any of these private revelations as true, incredulity in many well tested and verified apparitions is foolhardy.

The Catholic Church is very careful in giving Her approbation to personal revelations, or inspirations. These spiritual

phenomena can be very easily deceptively duplicated. The devils are known to appear to various souls in order to throw all the apparitions including the true one into disrepute. The devils also appear to individuals pursuing a spiritual life. They do this to encourage them in a false path they have begun or to wean them away from God, the true Faith, and the Church. Once someone begins to put more faith and trust in their personal spiritual experiences than in the sound and safe belief and practices of the Church that have been unquestionably given to us by God, they are almost irreparably lost. Pride and vanity enter into the picture and they would sooner die in this miserable lie than be humbled by admitting the truth.

There are also human endeavors to imitate and feign spiritual experiences. This occurs for various reasons such as the need to feel a part of a group. There are individuals that have attended Charismatic “services” and then after seeing others babbling and fainting they too through the power of suggestion or the desire to conform begin babbling and fainting. There are also times when a person

wishes to rise above the others or be distinguished from the others and makes false claims of spiritual experiences. There obviously is nothing spiritual in these situations.

We are all called to a mystical life, because we each have a soul that was created by God for the one and only ultimate purpose or destination of union with Him. We must all strive for this union. At the same time the Church and Her many mystics and ascetics is always very cautious and warns us to be so too. The devils may appear as angels of light or we may be actually deceiving ourselves. We therefore must learn and practice the true discerning of spirits, so that we will not be led astray.

I have wandered a bit from the topic, but it seems necessary to point out that we are all called to an intimate union with God in our private spiritual lives nevertheless, we must also be constantly on the lookout, lest we be deceived from ourselves or from others. This revelation of which we are speaking is personal rather than public. All that is necessary for us to believe has been publically revealed by Christ and transmitted to us through the Apostolic

succession. No private revelation is necessary, and if ever it contradicts the public revelation contained in the doctrines and practices of the Church we can be certain that it is false. God cannot contradict Himself.

St. Paul tells us that if anyone, (an angel or even St. Paul himself) should ever teach a doctrine other than what he has preached, that we should reject it. The publically revealed and preserved doctrines of the Church are therefore the measure and guide of all other private experiences. All that Christ has said and done was seen or heard directly by the Apostles and the traditions that they fostered are what God inspired them with. All others are either suspect or absolutely false.

How then do we know that the Church has not faltered in one way or another? The answer was given us on Pentecost Sunday. The Holy Ghost came upon the Apostles and as they received Him they understood all that Jesus had taught them and were guided in all that they did in directing the Church. This same Holy Ghost is promised to remain with us until the end of time. In the valid and licit confection of episcopal consecration this

giving and receiving of the Holy Ghost takes place. In this manner the Church is guided and protected by the Holy Ghost.

Please note that the Holy Ghost does not give anything new, but promotes and preserves what Jesus Christ has already given. It is a kind of negative guidance as it is more of a preservative from error than it is a direct guiding. This is what we see and understand in the doctrine of papal infallibility. The Holy Ghost does not guarantee

everything that the men in the Church do, but only when it concerns matters of faith and morals.

So we see that the measure of the truth of all spiritual experiences or beliefs must be in conformity to what has already been given and preserved in the true Church. The only visible and sure guarantee of God's guidance is in the visible and physical, valid and licit, Apostolic succession. This is where God has promised to (and does) abide and guide the Church.

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# The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Truth Itself

Bishop Bonaventure Strandt, OFM

How many lies do you suppose you hear in a single day? Have you ever stopped to consider how many people in your own life are imbued with the spirit of lying? This follows necessarily from the fact that Satan, the father of lies, has been given very much authority over our wicked generation, and his children have received much training in the art of deception. People no longer resemble human beings anymore, because the proper object of the intellect is truth, and no one seeks it anymore. The prophecy of St. Malachi has been fulfilled, but not in the way, perhaps, that you expected. More than any gender lines being blurred, the characteristic that makes humans to be so inhuman today is the blatant infusion of lies into every part of their existence.

The liars that you encounter may not be those who are close to you in relationship or proximity. They may very well be the ones who feed you stories from around the world about the events and tragedies, the whirlwind of emotionally charged societies and groups,

all vying and crying out for their will to be done. That is putting it very concisely: the corrupted majority of humankind seeks one thing: “My will be done.” The serpent’s lie has been resurrected from the Garden of Eden: All you need to do is to serve yourself, and do your own will, and you will be like gods. Once a person tunes their hearing to the suggestion of the Old Snake, God and His infinite perfections are soon forgotten, and much less sought after.

This is obviously the reverse of the correct order that the Lord of all creation has established; but this hardly matters in our age of complete liberality. Our people are just the same as those fools found in the Book of Wisdom, the same ones who wish to crown themselves with every flower immediately, because they know that every flower is withering away, and will shortly be nothing but corruption. These are the same ones, whom God Himself deems fools, who say: “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” This is a carefully crafted falsification of the purpose of our existence,

based on half-truths and numbed consciences. There is nothing new under the sun, nor is there any difference in the way people lie to themselves to avoid the inevitable reality that God is the Alpha and the Omega, both the beginning and the end of every life.

It is true that we all die. What is terribly false, however, is that this little time spent among the living is the only happiness we have to hope for. It is interesting how many different ways we have found for renaming lies, isn't it? People will tell you that they are not lying, they are embellishing the truth, or stretching it, or changing one little fact. Even Catholics sometimes forget that the simple act of omitting necessary facts can constitute lying. What sadness our world has thrown itself into with its demonic spirit of lying! It is especially tragic when our humble Lord Jesus is constantly inviting us with the voice of all gentleness: "The Truth shall make you free."

Jesus, of course, did not only mean to say that our telling the truth and speaking correctly will set us free. We know this because He later declared to His bewildered and disheartened

Apostles: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." Philip and the others were expecting some sort of complicated answer, not yet understanding that the Truth is so simple. They wondered just exactly how they would be able to live without Him walking with them as He had been doing for those three years. He gave the simple answer to every doubt and fear: "**I am the Way.**" Do you need to know how to live? "**I am the Way.**" You wish to know whom you can believe in this world full of liars? "**I am the Truth.**" You are full of miseries on account of this difficult mortal existence? Remember, the Lord tells us constantly: "**I am the Life.**"

Just as the planets of our solar system orbit around our sun; so does each and every single human life orbit around the Divine Sun: the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The success of this orbit depends upon our acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ as the Divine Guide of our lives, and whether or not we will accept all of His teachings as the objective truth, despite the lies that the world may attempt to inject. So many lives are wildly spinning entirely out of control because they have lost

the Way. They no longer search for the Truth. They care nothing anymore for the only Life worth living in. The Apostle tells us that Jesus is all things in all. All things were made through Him, with Him, and unto Him. No amount of attempted denial of His Divinity will ever change that truth.

This article has everything to do with the Blessed Mother, in fact. This is because our eternal salvation through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is only possible with Mary, who can never be separated from Jesus. Pope Pius XII, when solemnly defining the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven, body and soul, warned that anyone who would dare to deny, or change, or in any way tamper with this infallible and divine declaration, would not only be marked for destruction, but would incur the wrath of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. Imagine what that means for every Protestant of whatever sect who says: "Mary was just an ordinary woman." The wrath of the Holy Apostles will be on their heads! Every "St. Peter's Episcopal Church", or "St. Paul's Lutheran Church" will be utterly destroyed by the

very Apostles who bear their names! They will be condemned for their open hatred of the Queen of the Apostles, the one whom Saint Peter and Saint Paul reverence as the Immaculate and Glorious Virgin Mother of God.

The Modernists have adopted the revolting ideal that Protestants are not enemies of Truth, but they are our "separated brethren." But what separates us? For the love of God, do we love lying so much that we ignore that what separates us is their rejection of the solemn declaration of the Holy Spirit. That is a blasphemy! Protestantism is a religion full of blasphemy. Or have we forgotten how much Catholic blood it took to water this demonic religion? Yes, I said demonic. If you disagree or don't recall, you had better brush up on the history of how the churches of Luther and Henry were able to grow. Very similarly to Islam, it was rampant butchery, pillaging, and complete and utter violence against every mark of peaceful and true Christianity. Where did the beautiful churches of Protestant England originate? They were stolen from Catholics, by force! Why were there suddenly so few Catholics left on the island of England, and so

few who were able to establish themselves in the New World? Is it because they converted to this new religion that destroyed the Mass, murdered the monks, and hated the Blessed Mother? Absolutely not! They were murdered in cold blood, in enormous numbers, and buried quickly in that demonic attempt to do what will never be done: to destroy the true light of the Catholic Faith.

Our America, also known as Babylon, has become so disgustingly infected with this plague of dogmatic tolerance, that even remnant Catholics have become lazy in their knowledge of how to defend the rights and the honor due to the Spouse of Christ, the Holy Catholic Church. Forget the lies of the news and of harmful gossip now, and focus upon the lies that endanger your immortal soul! How many lies do you hear about God on any given day? I have just exposed one, and I am certain that no God-fearing Catholic would ever consider as a brother, someone who openly insults his or her mother. That is all very logical and true, don't you agree? My mother is not only the Holy Roman Catholic Church, but the Blessed Virgin

Mary, the Mother of Truth Itself. When she is denied her divine rights of hyperdulia, and when her place in heaven above all the angels and saints is attacked, then God Himself is deeply insulted. After all, it is His Mother who is also insulted by the attacks of lying tongues. For Who is Jesus Christ? Do we not even hold in common with Protestants that He is the Divine Son of God? Then how can we logically refer to Mary with any other title than the Mother of God?

Lies concerning things that God has irrevocably fixed will never be logical. Today, we face so many of the spiritual sons of Caiphas, who forbid us to preach in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His name is taken out of public places. He is not welcome in schools. We are threatened not to invoke Him in public. We have one nation under God? Yes, only this god's name is money, and not Jesus. Those who despise Mary will be cursed by God for all eternity. You may invoke Jesus now all that you wish, but if deny Mary her place, you will certainly be among those who lament before the throne of the Judge on the Terrible Day, saying: "Lord, did we not preach in Thy Name?" What will be

the answer? Not only will He reply that He doesn't know these Protestants who spoke to the wind about the Word made flesh; but He will also express His especial "anathema sit" for those wicked souls who despised His most beloved of all creatures, Mary Immaculate.

Let it be well understood in depth of our souls that no one, speaking in the Spirit, says "anathema" to Jesus. On the other hand, **everyone, speaking with the spirit of lying, says "anathema" to Mary!** The prophecy that she spoke in the blissful ardor of the Holy Spirit will be forever true: "Henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed." She is far too meek to take upon herself the declaration of the next clause of that statement, which properly belongs to God as Judge. And that Eternal Truth, that great King Who loves His Queen Mother, has declared to us that all generations shall call her blessed, or they will suffer for all eternity in the pool of unquenchable fire, with all liars. He Himself specifically declares that every liar will burn for all eternity in these awful torments. There are no lies so ugly in all the world today as the ones that attack the very words of

the Holy Spirit contained in the dogmas and doctrines of the true Catholic Church, which are preserved undefiled by myself and my brother Bishops.

When you have the Truth, you have no need for fear or anxiety. Our Lord reassures you in every way by opening up His Heart and saying: **"I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world."** May the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth and Wisdom, give you the grace to say with all of the blessed that one most beautiful and wondrously pregnant phrase: Come Lord Jesus, come.



# Spiritual Growth and Development

Bishop Giles O.F.M

The Holy Ghost is alive and well in the Catholic Church. It is not to the Modernist Novus Ordo sect that we refer, but to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The true Church is the same from the beginning to the end. The doctrines of the Church are as unchangeable as God Himself.

Men too often consider the doctrines of the Church as the teachings of men. The teachings of men are constantly in need of updating or modifications to reflect the changes in man's development (whether physically, mentally, or spiritually). We therefore see the fashions of men changing more frequently than the seasons. The commercialization of society is constantly presenting us with "NEW," or "NEW AND IMPROVED" products or materials that reflect the latest improvements in understanding, or techniques, etc. Very frequently our societal fashions return to previous concepts and ideas, indicating that we have somehow strayed from the best and must now return to that better situation of the past.

Every aspect of our lives today bears witness to this constant change and fluctuation of our thoughts and actions; we are constantly searching for new things, or better or more efficient ways. It is a constant search and discovery, with each generation attempting to improve upon the previous one. There are constantly: "new" foods to discover; "new" places to see; "new" things to possess; "new" medicines for our illnesses; etc. All this is a simple primitive desire that is buried deep in our souls of finding and obtaining paradise or the perfection of everything.

The spiritual growth of every one upon this earth that will make it into Heaven goes through various stages of growth and development. Gradually in our curiosity for the new and better, we are brought by the grace of God (if we cooperate with Him) to see the shallowness of all created things. The restlessness of our souls (to borrow from St. Augustine) takes us from one thing to another. Each thing, even when enjoyed to its fullest extent, leaves us unfulfilled

and unsatisfied. Many who are without the grace of God or who have rejected this grace experience a continual frustration and disgust, and enter into a complete despair. Truly, if this created world is all that there is, then it is a very cruel world and is not worth living in. There is this constant promise or mirage of happiness, and everything leaves us empty. The Wisdom of Solomon rings very true: “vanity of vanity and all is vanity;” and everything is a “chase after the wind.” If we can begin to see clearly what is happening within so many souls, we likewise begin to understand the current crises in our societies. The rise in: depression, suicides, murder, divorce, abortion, and crimes of every description, all show very clearly the frustration and emptiness that men experience in their personal lives - trying to find purpose, meaning, and ultimately happiness. If we are to correct or help any of these, we must first realize that this frustration and despair follow logically from our innate spiritual desires of perfection and happiness. The solution therefore, is not in numbing our minds with alcohol, chemicals or pharmaceuticals, but rather

a deeper awakening of our souls and a development of our spiritual lives.

The life of St. Francis of Assisi offers us a glimpse of how the spiritual development is designed to progress. His first stage in life is not much different than what we see all around us today. St. Francis was the son of a cloth merchant; he had money and friends and the ability to pursue his pleasures and passions. St. Francis did exactly what we see most people in the world do or attempt to do today. St. Francis then discovered the shallowness or emptiness of these things – just as many in the world do today. But, whereas many in the world today then fall into anxiety, despair or depression; St. Francis corresponded with grace and the blessings of faith and doctrines of the Church, and lifted his heart to higher things. St. Francis did not grow in hatred for creation, but rather he grew in appreciation and understanding of all these things. He saw all of creation as his brother or sister, for we all came forth from the hand of the same God. We are all children of God: the inanimate creation of rocks, soil, water, air; the animate creation of all the plants and

animals, etc. all were seen by St. Francis as coming from the all-loving and good hand of God. In this frame of mind, St. Francis no longer sought his happiness in these things, but rather saw these things as reflections of God and His perfections, or as guide posts and markers showing the way to God. Instead of seeking happiness in these creatures themselves, he found that they served much better as constant reminders and directives to true happiness in Heaven with God.

St. Francis' soul grew from the materialism of the child to the gradual learning and understanding of the youth or adolescent. With this increasing understanding came also an increase of love for God and all of His creation. This spiritual growth matured and culminated with his entry into eternal glory with God.

While upon this earth we are subject therefore, to change, modification, and hopefully improvement rather than regression and despair. Either we are moving in a positive direction of using this creation to see and draw closer to God; or we are moving in a negative direction of frustration, emptiness and ultimately despair of all of this

earth, culminating in damnation. Understanding this necessary growth or regression makes the variability of men's teachings understandable.

The Church, however is not human; She is not a being subject to change (as regards her doctrine and mission). The Church has and does clarify and elucidates the revelation of God and God's will to us, but She never creates new things or changes what has already been defined. The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ and is alive with the Spirit of the Holy Ghost. The Church is God living with us here and now in the creation of time and space. In this sense the Church is divine, and just as God is unchanging, likewise the Church in Her doctrines are unchanging.

God did make clarifications and further elucidations of the things He had previously revealed, but He did not change them. For example: God gave us through Moses the Ten Commandments; among which is the following: "Thou shall not kill." Christ later came and told us that our justice must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. We must not only refrain from physical murder, but we are further commanded

to refrain from anger and all the emotions that tend in this direction. We are told that God looks into the heart and that we will be judged not only by what we physically do but also by all that we willingly speak, contemplate, and desire. This was not a new commandment but rather a clarification and enlightenment of the same law.

In like manner we see that the Church does exactly the same thing. Every doctrine that is declared or defined does not contradict or undermine any other doctrine, rule or law, but rather further elucidates and clarifies what is already given us. This is just as we would expect once we understand that the Church is not a human body (even though She incorporates us humans into Herself), but is rather a divine body (the Mystical Body of Christ). We understand that when the Church speaks, it is not with the words of men, but rather with the words of God.

The men that God uses in the Church for this task are specially guided and protected by the Holy Ghost to perform the functions given them. They are therefore empowered by God Himself with all power on heaven and on earth. The Apostles and their

true successors have this power, authority, jurisdiction (and every other philosophic distinction or division of power that we might examine); and this fullness of power is given to them directly by the Holy Ghost as true (valid and licit) transference of Apostolic succession and is passed on from one generation to the next.

Understanding these things we can easily see and draw the conclusion that the Modernist Novus Ordo Church is not the true Catholic Church. The true Church has under the guidance of the Holy Ghost and example of Christ declared that there is no salvation outside Her. Those who do not believe all that the Church teaches and are baptized are lost. Only those who believe all that Christ reveals through the Church and are baptized can be saved.

The Modernist Novus Ordo Church declares that salvation is open to everyone including: those who broke away from the Church but still hold to the moniker "Christian," as well as those who have never and will never accept Jesus Christ. This is clearly not a further elucidation of the previous law or doctrine but is openly in contradiction

with what God has spoken through the Church for over two thousand years. This one thing (and there are many more if you care to look for them) proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the Modernist Novus Ordo Church is not: unchanging, is not guided by the unchanging Holy Ghost, and is therefore not the true Church.

Every Modernist or Traditionalist that is in union with this false Church or recognizes her in one way or another as representing or speaking for God must logically fall under the same condemnation of being outside the true Mystical Body of Christ – The Church.

Every person or sect who claims to represent the Church or preach, confer sacraments, etc. without being able to show the succession and reception of the fullness of the Apostleship (authority, jurisdiction, etc.) is likewise not the true Church, but is rather another of the many inspirations of devils for the further confusion and confounding and ultimate damnation of souls.

May we ever recall the words of St. Paul: "... though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach a

gospel to you beside that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." If anyone should preach a doctrine different from what you have received – do not believe it. We are not to believe it even if St. Paul himself or an angel of light were to preach something different. Let us not be led away by the worldly pomp, prestige, or pageantry of all the various false churches, but cling unwavering to our dying breath to the unchanging words of God spoken to us by His Church.

## The Sunday Sermon

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# Franciscan Saints

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JUNE 3

BLESSED ANDREW OF SPELLO

Confessor, *First Order*

Andrew was a parish priest in his native city of Spello, not far from Assisi, and administered his duties with the utmost zeal of a true shepherd of souls. He admired St. Francis and his first companions, and reflected on how they went about preaching and doing good in the cities and towns of Italy, just as Christ our Lord and His apostles once traveled about in Judea.

In 1223, when his mother and sister had died, the forty-four year old parish priest came to St. Francis and asked to be received among the brethren of his order. The holy founder gladly granted his request, personally invested him with the holy habit, and soon sent him out to preach.

In the year 1226 Andrew was present with other brethren about the deathbed of our Seraphic Father. In giving him his blessing, St. Francis foretold that much fruit would be derived from his preaching of the Divine Word. The results soon verified the prophecy.

When Andrew was called to Spain to attend the General Chapter of the Order, a prolonged drought had dried up all the fields of Soria, where the chapter was being held. Andrew told the inhabitants that this was a punishment for their sins, and warned them forcefully to do penance. They were all moved to such deep contrition that they burst into tears. Then he entreated God to ward off the punishment, and behold, at once a plentiful rain fell which restored everything to life. In other places, too, God supported his words with the most unusual miracles; he even restored dead persons to life.

Andrew rejoiced at the blessings which resulted everywhere from his sermons. But at the same time his reputation spread everywhere, and his humility urged him to evade the honors. With the consent of his superiors he retired to the secluded convent of the Carceri, where, engaged in quiet prayer and severe mortification, he led

a more heavenly than earthly life.

One day the Lord of heaven visited him. In the grotto in which Andrew lived, Christ appeared to him in the form of a beautiful boy. But just then the little bell rang out for Vespers. At the first signal Andrew left the grotto in order to heed the call of obedience. When he returned from Vespers, he found the Divine Child still there, who said to him: "It was well that you heeded the call of obedience; I will be merciful to you."

Not long afterwards Andrew was granted the greatest of all graces here on earth, the grace of a holy death. Rich in virtues and merits, he died on June 3, 1254. Numerous miracles occurred at his grave in the church of the Apostle St. Andrew at Spello. The public veneration accorded him was approved by Popes Clement XII and Benedict XIV.

## ON TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT FOR SIN

1. Consider that temporal evils are sometimes sent by God as a punishment for sin, as Blessed Andrew pointed out

in the case of the prolonged drought in Soria. As a punishment for the sin of our first parents, pain and misery have become the lot of the entire human race. For the Lord said to Adam: "Because thou hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3:17). As a punishment for his sins it was announced to David that his son should die, and because he had taken a census out of vanity, he had to suffer the penalty for his pride. In the days of the prophet Elias, no rain fell for three years as a punishment for the sins of the people. Let us recognize from these instances the horror of sin and the severity of the divine justice. If His chastising hand strikes us, we should humbly submit. Have you perhaps murmured at it in the past? That would be a sign of impenitence.

2. Consider that one may not consider all temporal evils a punishment for sin. The Pharisees passed judgment in this rash manner when they said to the man born blind: "Thou wast wholly born in

sins” (John 9:34). But our Lord said: “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). Hence we may not look upon every misfortune that assails us as a punishment for sin, and, of course, we should not ask: “How have I deserved this?” Perhaps God just wishes to manifest His works in you, in the patience with which He strengthens you to endure quietly, and in the glory with which He will reward you in eternity. Still less may we attribute to their sins the misfortunes that afflict others. Have you perhaps judged thus rashly?

3. Consider that nothing is so effective in warding off misfortunes that God inflicts because of our sins as sincere penance and earnest prayer.

Through these means Ninive, whose destruction had already been decreed, was spared. That is why rain fell for the benefit of those who had heeded the sermon of Blessed Andrew and contritely pleaded with God. Do likewise, for, says Thomas a Kempis (1:24), “now thy tears are acceptable, thy groans are heard, thy sorrow is satisfying and purifieth the soul.”

#### PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O gracious God, who through the merits and intercession of Blessed Andrew didst grant serene weather and rain according to desire and need, pour forth in our souls a shower of graces, that, purified of the filth of sin, we may be found worthy to enjoy Thy blessed vision through all eternity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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#### **NOTE:**

**The Seraph is not published in July and August.  
We are looking forward to seeing you again in September.**

# Reflections on a Courageous Soul

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

## Part V

If the dawn of a new year brings with it new hopes and beginnings, what is one to say of a new decade? The year is 1980, and this writer is in the midst of trying to decide where I should go to attend a seminary. It was not an easy decision. It took two years before Providence handed me a copy of *The Seraph*. Once this occurred, the decision was much easier.

Unknown to many at the time Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc began to consecrate those priests who would continue Apostolic Succession in the Roman Catholic Church. Archbishop Ngo consecrated Bishops Moises Carmona and Adolfo Zamora in France on October 17, 1981. They consecrated Bishop George Musey on April 1, 1982.

I believe it was in late Spring of 1982 when then-Fr. Louis was asked if he would accept to be consecrated as a bishop of the Catholic Church. I still recall the day when he gathered the friars in a nearly empty office room to inform us of this news. We sat on the floor with our backs to the wall. He wanted to give us an opportunity to speak before he made a final decision.

Time and experience allows us to look back and wonder what three young and inexperienced friars

could offer in such a situation. Nonetheless, he wanted to give us an opportunity to express our thoughts. I have no recollection what I said-if I said anything.

The one apparent point of discussion that is remembered was that of God now providing a means by which the friars would be ordained. After enduring the arrogance of the Lefebvrite priests and the many inquiries of various persons, the vital question would be answered. I still recall then-Fr. Louis commenting that this was the only reason why he was interested in being consecrated, albeit an important one!

Plans were made and invitations were extended to many over the next few months. The date of the consecration was to be on August 24, 1982. The place would be Sacred Heart Church in Buffalo, NY. The principal consecrator was Bishop George Musey of Houston, TX. The co-consecrators were Bishop Moises Carmona of Acapulco, Mexico and Bishop Adolfo Zamora of Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Well before the consecration took place, the “traditionalist Pharisees” were howling at the top of their voices. Some claimed “invalid” while others claimed “illicit,” still others howled both “invalid and illicit!” All such claims were

ignored, knowing the consecration was both valid and licit. Time would demonstrate why such claims were made so loudly.

The concerned clergymen were either ill-equipped to make such a decision or they simply wanted no part of the order established by Holy Mother Church. To state it otherwise, they did not want to submit themselves to Catholic authority. Many of them by now had become “independent” priests, i.e., renegades – scoundrels of the pharisaical type, although, at the time few were describing them in this manner.

It should be noted here that prior to his consecration, then-Fr. Louis had a number of priests friends whom he had met over the previous four years. They were a varied number of secular and religious clergymen who desired to continue to celebrate the Latin Tridentine Mass, but, of course, were unable to either in their respective dioceses or religious communities.

After Bp. Louis’ consecration, much indeed changed, especially when the two bishops (Bps. George Musey and Louis Vezelis) attempted to have all of the “traditionalists” clergy submit to them. One would have thought you were dealing with a room of cranky, spoiled brats who would not submit to parental authority. This was most revealing, for we found out who was truly Catholic and who had motives that were less than noble.

In fact, it was nothing less than clerical anarchy of the worst type. The laity looked upon these clergymen as the “cream of the crop.” Apparently, the cream had soured somewhere along the way. They were the brave ones who left their dioceses and religious communities. The problem (heresy) which developed among the “Catholic remnant” was a one of obedience.

Many of them had gained enough “independence” to learn how to rebel against legitimate Catholic authority, and they weren’t about to perform the necessary and noble act. Instead, they followed in the footsteps of the “best” of the Protestant clergy. In reality, they would submit to no one but themselves.

Actually, many of them did submit to the “Protestant boards” of their respective churches. They had to if they wanted to be paid a regular “slave” wage. They established their own “kingdoms.” From the small rural chapels to the large urban congregations, anarchy ruled. Although none would be willing to admit it, and in some cases perhaps were not consciously aware of it, they took as their motto; “It is better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven!”

This may sound harsh to some thirty years after the “crimes” had been committed, but there is nothing like being an eyewitness to this chaos.

The fallout from all of this was

that Bp. Louis saw many former clerical friends part ways with this Franciscan Friar. There were a few, very few, who remained. It indeed, was a tragic scene; one which I'm sure Satan experienced a great amount of devilish delight.

Imagine for a moment, a battlefield filled with these same clergy who form a barrier around the laity. They must battle the Modernists, the Protestants and other non-Catholics. They are fighting to the best of their abilities trying to keep these enemies at a safe distance. They do this by offering Holy Mass, administering the Sacraments, providing spiritual guidance, and otherwise bolstering the hearts and souls of many frantic, weak souls.

As the battle continues, it reaches a climax, although most are not aware of this fact. The priest warriors are made aware of true Roman Catholic bishops who are attempting to get their attention. The bishops know precisely how they are able to assist these men, but few are willing to accept it.

They erroneously believe the battle can be won without episcopal assistance. Over time, far too many of these priests are required to compromise beyond the bounds of priestly decorum and decency. The result of these treasonous actions produces great harm to the laity. Unfortunately, neither the priests nor the laity were aware of it or they simply didn't care. The last

scene is not fully known, but can be foreseen. It is a spiritual wasteland beyond description.

You see dear reader, if only these clergymen (who continue to this day) would humbly submit themselves to episcopal authority, they would most importantly be spiritually protected under the episcopal coat-of-arms, and as a result fight the "good fight" more effectively.

Before the end of the year (1982), seven young men from Mexico arrived in Rochester, NY. It was the hope of the two Mexican bishops that these young men would be given the necessary seminarian training and ordained priests, returning to Mexico to further the work of the Church. After a short time, two of these young men were sent home, for it was determined they did not have a priestly vocation. The other five remained for some time. Four of them were invested into the Third Order. Classes continued for some time and all was reasonably well, but the Devil NEVER sleeps.

One is not allowed to reveal all of the details, but this reader has been present during some of the most bizarre actions of men that one could imagine. The end result was that, at different times, all five seminarians left. In a small community these types of circumstances are quite traumatizing, if only for a short while.

Over the years many have wondered

why our community has remained so small. This series of events with the young men from Mexico is an example of the spiritual battles we have been called upon to fight. One does not always know who will persevere in religious life and the seminary years, but an educated guess would lead me to conclude that among the five seminarians there may have been at least three priestly vocations. The good that could have been accomplished in Mexico will never be known ...

Bp. Louis had taken a trip to France shortly after his consecration in August 1982 to visit with Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc. He found him living alone in Toulouse, France in conditions which were not becoming for a prelate of the Church. The necessary arrangements were agreed upon and in November 1982, he arrived in Rochester, NY.

This was same month that the Mexican seminarians arrived. It was quite a month with many new faces!

There were many changes for all of us, especially the Archbishop. He was eighty-two when he came to live with us. I'm sure he enjoyed living in a religious house with a number of young men. The winters, though, were difficult for him. There is quite a difference in climate between the tropical climate of Vietnam, the southern coast of France and the long, cold, bitter winters of Upstate New York!

It was the cold winter of 1983-84 which brought with it the realization of who our enemies were, and just what they were willing to do to undermine our work.

The Chinese New Year was approaching and we were visited by a middle-aged Vietnamese businessman from New York City on a cold, snowy morning. I believe the man had called ahead of his visit so when he arrived we would not be surprised to see him. A short while later he pulled up in a white limousine!

Bp. Louis questioned the Archbishop as to whether he knew this nervous stranger. The Archbishop answered in the affirmative. Some may now question Bp. Louis about his judgment after the fact, but it must be understood that Bp. Louis wanted to find some means of relief for the Archbishop from the harsh winter we were experiencing. Once the identity of the man was determined (or so we thought), the Archbishop was allowed to leave, accompanied by a seminarian who would look after him and his health issues. I believe it was agreed upon that the trip would last about ten days.

Time and space does not allow me to go into all of the details which have been recorded in previous issues of *The Seraph*. What is important are the series of strange, unexpected events which took place on this tragic journey.

A few days after arriving in New York, the Archbishop and the seminarian were driven to Washington, D. C. to visit the Apostolic Delegate of the U. S. for the Vatican – none other than the Freemason Pio Laighi. The traitor to the Faith was attempting to compromise the Archbishop and all he had accomplished in recent years. The correct term would be to capitulate. Laighi wanted the Archbishop to sign a document, indicating that he was sorry for all of his “misdeeds” and desired to return to the “Catholic Church.”

For those who made claims at the time that the Archbishop was senile, this incident would prove very simply and without question that he was NOT. The Archbishop saw through the Freemason’s scheme and would have no part of it. The plot was foiled for the time being.

They returned to New York where several Vietnamese clergy began to appear. What was not readily known, at least not by most of us (I won’t speak for Bp. Louis or the Archbishop), is that a lot of wheels were beginning to turn which were unknown to us.

The time for our two travelers to return came and went. It had become apparent that the owner of the “welfare” hotel – the same man who came for the Archbishop was not willing to release him. Bp. Louis decided to go to New York, along with a man who was living with us, but not a member of the community,

nor was he a seminarian. I wish to clarify this man’s position because he would later embellish his position and importance in the matter.

Bp. Louis was allowed to see the Archbishop (strategically placed on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor), but was not allowed to leave with him. Although the “end game” had been exposed, we were at a loss as to how to get the Archbishop out of the hotel prison. This hotel owner, who was by now exposed as an enemy of the Archbishop, had his own set of “bouncers.” There was no easy way to simply walk out of the building.

The New York City Police were brought in. They required proof that the Archbishop actually lived with us in Rochester. This is where this writer became actively involved. It was decided that I would fly to New York with the proper documents to prove the Archbishop lived with us.

Presenting the documents did not solve the problem. It was by now we highly suspected (with some degree of proof) that the Archdiocese of New York was involved and speaking to the police.

We had exhausted our options because hiring a lawyer in New York was far too costly for our small community.

I still recall that lonely, sad flight from New York’s LaGuardia to Rochester, when the five of us left this unfortunate city. We had desired

with all of our hearts that we would have a sixth member to fly with us, but it was not so.

It did not take too long to realize how and why we had been hoodwinked into this plot. It indeed, was a plot. A plot to kidnap and compromise the one man in the Church hierarchy who would stand firm against the Modernists traitors. It was realized just how naïve we were - for Bp. Louis was working very hard to overcome the efforts of these men, but by that time their scheming was out-maneuvering our own efforts.

The real lesson in this series of events – events dramatic enough to produce a real-life book that would seem more fictional than real - is who was involved in the kidnapping of Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc, and why. Once the Apostolic Delegate became involved, this meant the Vatican was informed – meaning “John Paul II;” we are quite certain as stated previously that the New York Archdiocese was involved along with the New York City Police (America’s finest? HA!) We should not forget an unknown number of Vietnamese clergy (priests and bishops) who “presented” themselves to the Archbishop. Some apparently were only curious to see this “giant among men” in Catholic and Vietnamese history; others went to taunt or otherwise disrespect the elderly prelate.

If there is one single event in our nearly thirty-four year history to

indicate where we stand in the eyes of Modernist Rome, this is the event. There is no desire to embellish history for it speaks to those of us who saw it firsthand and so clearly.

The small, humble Friary in Rochester, NY has long since become a symbol of a spiritual fortress that must stand firm against the tidal wave of heretics who occupy *our* buildings. Indeed, we must persevere to the end of our earthly lives if we desire to be the “good and faithful servants.” These heretics can do nothing to objectively harm us. We must simply carry out our duties and responsibilities and remain steadfast.

The lessons of New York in 1984 are a reminder of the power of Hell pitted against the angelic choirs of Heaven. Do not be fooled by that which you CANNOT see - for they are indeed visible through their human agents!

In the many years which have passed since then, a number of men have come and gone. We must remind ourselves that not all who present themselves are called or are fit for the priesthood. Even those who have been are unworthy.

It must be added as a reminder. The Friars have many enemies, many who do not know or understand us, many who have believed terrible lies. All of this has been carried out to keep needy but unaware souls from us. The Modernists and “traditionalists” provided a battlefield of 360 degrees

– a war which continues to this day.

While this war continues, we have had many joyful moments. The first of these would demonstrate that after the sorrowful tragedy of the winter of 1984, the Summer would give us our first priest. Fr. Bernard Colussy, OFM was ordained on June 29, 1984 on the grounds of Our Lady of the Angels Friary in Rochester. Three years later, Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM was ordained at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church in Milwaukee, WI on June 13, 1987. Two years later, Fr. Giles Butler, OFM was ordained at St. Joseph's Mission in Union, KY on September 17, 1989. With the sorrows of the 1980's also came the joyful, happy moments.

The 1990's would come and go with no priestly ordinations. Those years would provide us with spiritual food for thought. It was a reminder of the spiritual desert which surrounded us. Those times bring with it questions which eventually are answered by ourselves through our knowledge of the crisis and through prayer which is so very vital in "dry" times.

Our work continued in Rochester and elsewhere. Missions had been established in the 1980's in Buffalo, NY, Phoenix, AZ, Lafayette, LA, Tampa, FL, Akron and Toledo, OH. It should be noted here that St. Joseph's Mission was the first of the Missions, having been established in the late 1970's.

Missions in Lubbock, TX and Radisson, WI were started in the 1990's.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century brought with it a number of changes. In December 2000, Fr. Joseph was sent to Lubbock, TX. At the time he was also responsible for the Missions in Phoenix, AZ and Lafayette, LA. Since then, Missions have been established in Buena Park, CA (2006), Hallettsville, TX (2004), and recently in Dallas, TX (2013). Fr. Bernard started a Mission in St. John, MI several years ago. I apologize for not knowing the year when it was founded.

These trips to the Missions do not include the various other trips which have been taken by the clergy to places far and wide – literally from Alaska to Florida to Mexico to New York and many places in between.

Apostolates of a different type have begun in recent years. The Catholic Faith Radio Program began on November 9, 2007 in Lubbock, TX. This program, now in its sixth year is streamed live over the web. Holy Mass is now streamed live from Waubeka, WI and Lubbock, TX. Bp. Giles will begin the Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy for high school girls in the Fall of 2013.

The new century has given us one priestly ordination and two episcopal consecrations which we hope and pray will provide for our need of the fullness of the priesthood for many

years to come. Bp. Giles Butler, OFM was consecrated on August 24, 2005 by Bp. Louis Vezelis, OFM in Rochester, NY. Fr. Bonaventure Strandt, OFM was ordained on July 14, 2010 at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church in Waubeka, WI. He was consecrated on August 15, 2012 on the grounds of Our Lady of the Angels Friary in Rochester, NY.

I have continued on in this final segment of this series of articles at some length, to demonstrate to our friends and benefactors what has become the fruit of one seed. It was a seed first planted in Rochester, NY in 1930. That seed began to germinate in John Vezelis' teen years, first with the preparatory seminary of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Pennsylvania, and later with the Franciscans in Kennebunkport, Maine in the late 1940's. It would begin to root itself firmly with German Franciscans in Teutopolis, IL during his novitiate year (1949-50); then with the Italian Franciscans in Catskill, NY during his years of philosophy (1950-52); and finally with the French-Canadian Franciscans in Montreal, Canada in his years of theology (1952-56).

Those roots were tested and yet strengthened in those years in South Korea. It was truly those years which prepared him for what he would ultimately face when he returned in 1975. The courage he had shown to this point in his life would have filled the lifetime of most men. Yet, at the age of forty-seven a new type

of courage would need to come forth – if he would remain true to the Faith and the Franciscan Rule.

Those who knew him well witnessed his faults and failings. This conclusion, though, is not about his failures, but his successes. This writer is only able to speak for himself – and that I shall do.

Those things which were accomplished under his guidance and leadership are quite amazing when one considers the constant obstacles which blocked his path. A lesser man would have compromised long ago. This clearly demonstrates an extraordinary degree of supernatural virtue, particularly that of fortitude.

His work and legacy will be carried on for many years to come. My debt of gratitude will go with me to my grave.

I ask all who read these inadequate words to reflect on his life and thank God in all of His Goodness for such a man as Most Reverend Louis Vezelis, OFM. These men don't come along often, and yet we have been so privileged to have known him and his heart – Deus Caritas Est!

**CONFERENCES ON THE  
BLESSED TRINITY.**

**BY  
THE REV. DR. J. J:  
O'CONNELL, O.S.B.,  
ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,  
GASTON CO., N. C.**

CONFERENCE VIII.

*ON THE BLESSED  
EUCHARIST, THE GREATEST  
GIFT OF THE BLESSED  
TRINITY.*

God can reveal and institute mysteries. He has done so. And this is a modification or change of the law of nature which is the result of our experience only. It pleases God to make it dependent on a supernatural act. The effects of Baptism and all the sacraments are beyond the province of nature. Our experience in the physical world would lead us to conclude that such effects are impossible. What connection is there between the pouring of water on the head of an infant and the washing of the soul from sin? The effect is supernatural. God binds Himself by a covenant, as in the natural world, that when certain acts are performed He will give them a supernatural effect. When the Author of nature makes certain effects dependent on certain spiritual causes it is no more in opposition to the laws of nature

than other supernatural exceptions.

In the Incarnation God took upon Himself our nature, and subjected Himself to its conditions in all but sin and imperfection. In the Eucharist the God-Man subsists under the appearance of bread and wine; and subjects Himself to their laws and conditions. We do not see the inward substance of anything; it is hidden under the accidents. Leibnitz and other learned men maintain that transubstantiation does not contradict the senses in any manner, as is vulgarly objected, and they assert that there is no ground for assailing the doctrine on philosophical principles.

Had our Lord said, "This bread is My Body and this wine is My Blood," there would be a contradiction. In Greek there is a difference of genders between the pronoun *this* and the noun *bread*. The pronoun defines His Body and Blood, and not the bread and wine. An analysis of the words in which the pronoun is put establishes faith in the Real Presence.

Did not our Lord style it a commemoration? Paul explains this when he declares that the Eucharist is an exhibition, a showing forth, and a continuation of the death of Christ. Moreover, He lies hid under the appearances and is the object of faith.

Our Lord designates the Contents of the cup as the fruit of the vine. St. Luke relates that these words were used before the consecration. But it makes no difficulty, for after the change of the substances the outward appearance is unaltered. The great body of objections against the Real Presence cannot overthrow the doctrine; they are general impieties against Christianity. This divine institution was prophesied from the beginning of the world, and was typified by sacrifice, by the daily oblations of the law. It was the fruit of the tree of life planted in the far-off paradise of God, the remedy to heal the poison introduced into our veins by the bite of the venomous serpent. It was foreshadowed by the bread and wine of Melchisedech, according to whose order, and not that of Aaron, Christ will be a Priest forever. It was typified by the loaves of proposition daily renewed and placed before the face of the Lord in the temple; by the paschal lamb and the unleavened bread eaten annually, and annually commemorated, by which the people were saved from the angel of death. The manna that fell from heaven for forty years and fed the people in the wilderness; the particle of bread given by the angel to the faint and weary prophet, by which he was enabled to walk forty days in youthful vigor until he reached Horeb, the mountain

of God, and was translated in his chariot of burning glory — all typified the most Holy Eucharist, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is always with us to the end of time; for He will not leave us orphans.

The Blessed Eucharist is Jesus Christ, God and man whole and entire, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

This doctrine is contained in all liturgies, Latin, Greek, and Oriental. All the Fathers taught it, the martyrs died for it, the saints revered and received it. We have the universal consent of all Christian nations on this fact up to the sixteenth century, and of the majority of civilization at the present day. Up to the disastrous period of the so-called Reformation every priest and bishop ordained, every altar and church edifice, attest this wonderful truth.

A few hours before He entered on His Passion our Lord fulfilled His promise and instituted the Holy Eucharist. At the very time the Jews were plotting His death, He bequeathed to mankind the greatest prodigy of His love and perpetuated His presence on earth to the end of time. Like preservation, which is the continual going-on of the creative act, this mystery is the extension of the Incarnation; it makes our Lord

personally accessible to every human being. We become united to Him and sharers in all His merits.

Seated with His apostles at His last supper, He took bread into His holy and venerable hands, raised His eyes to heaven — if anything could be an effort to God it was this — He said, **THIS IS MY BODY.** He took wine in a cup, blessed it, and said, **THIS IS MY BLOOD.** He distributed the Sacrament to His apostles, and they ate and drank His Body and Blood, as He did Himself. By this act He made good His promises, established the priesthood, and instituted true Christian worship.

SS. Mark, Luke, and Paul relate the same circumstances, and in nearly the same words *as* St. Matthew. St. John supplements the other evangelists; he does not relate the institution, but the promise; which the other inspired penmen omitted. *Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end;* which saints tell us means not only to the end of His human life, but to the extreme of divine power. What greater favor could infinite power and love bestow? By the same power by which He changed water into wine, the rivers of Egypt into blood, and called all things from nothing, our blessed Lord at His last supper changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood. He

conferred the same power on His priests, who exercise It daily in the Mass, which is the *unbloody* sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and which differs from the sacrifice of the cross in the manner only of the offering. The sacrifice of the Mass is the same act as the sacrifice of the cross; It is the uninterrupted going-on of the same, and its application in its totality to every human soul to the end of the world. This world will last only as long as Mass is said; when the sacrifice will have ceased the world will perish.

The words of institution are so plain, so simple, and so explicit that there is hardly room for dispute or argument, according to St. Augustine's canon of interpretation: "We must take everything in Holy Writ in its simple and natural sense, unless there is a reason adduced for departing from it."

Created language could not render the words more expressive of the Catholic doctrine. All civilization for sixteen centuries, and two hundred and forty millions all the world over at this hour, believe that the Eucharist is Jesus Christ as firmly as we believe in God and in creation. All that remains is to rest behind the power of God's words until reasons are adduced to show why we should depart from them. The *onus probandi* is on our

separated friends.

The exceptions are only pretensions; they are very weak, and in a matter of natural science would not be listened to. There is nothing more common than to impart to a sign the name of the thing signified. We call a portrait by the name of the person whom it represents, and a map by the name of the country which it describes. This is very true. There is a relation between those things. They represent the objects for which they are drawn and embrace their idea; if not they would cease to be a representation. In the name of all that is sacred, what relation is there between a particle of bread and the Body of our Lord? This the most popular objection: that in many places in Holy Writ the verb “to be” means to represent, and that it has the same meaning in the words of institution.

*I am the true vine, . . . you the branches* (John xv. 1). *The rock was Christ* (1 Cor. x. 4). *The seven beautiful kine . . . are seven years of plenty* (Genesis xli. 26). It is claimed that they are parallel passages and explain the words of institution. Permit me to ask if there are not several thousand passages in Scripture where the verb *to be*, does not mean to represent, but has its literal meaning?

By what process or reason are you

authorized to detach the words of institution from the multitude of places and join them to the few that always form the exception? Because we do not say “childs” but “children,” the plural number of names is no longer found by adding “s” to the singular! This answer defeats the objection. But to join more closely, no passages are parallel, nor can they explain each other because they contain the same words; they must contain the same idea. All those passages are equivalent and explain each other, for they contain the same idea.

*I am the vine. The rock was Christ. The ten horns are ten kingdoms. The reapers are the angels. The harvest is the end of the world.* These are parallel, for they contain the same symbolical teaching, a dream, a vision, or a parable. Even the sacred penmen tell us they are speaking symbolically: *The rock was Christ. . . This is the meaning of the vision which I saw.*

God does not give us this key to the interpretation of His words. The world understands them as they were spoken. They are plain and simple and grand like God. This mystery sustains Christianity.

There are two other passages in Scripture which prove this faith most clearly. St. Paul contrasts the Jewish and pagan sacrifices with the Christian. He asserts that ours

are as real and as substantially partaken of as theirs (1 Cor. x 16). *The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?* St. Paul describes the institution as do the evangelists, and in the same words. But he was not content with the bare narrative. He draws practical conclusions, bases upon it solemn injunctions accompanied with awful threats, using words that cannot mislead: *Let a man prove and try himself. He that eateth and drinketh unmorally eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord.* He declares that a man drinks damnation to himself because he does not distinguish the Body of the Lord from other food. If the body of the Lord is not present there is no room for the distinction. An unworthy participation may be a sin against Almighty God, but surely not a sin against Christ's body.

To be guilty of murder a person must destroy, not a picture or photograph, but human life. Unless our Lord's body is in the Eucharist an abuse of the Eucharist cannot be designated as an actual injury to His sacred person. To say that a person offends against God is a stronger asseveration of guilt than to say that he offends against the

body of Christ, except by personal injury, as in the case of the Jews, who nailed Him to the cross.

Now, to sum up, our Lord promised this institution a long time before His death. The multitudes leave Him, the disciples waver, the apostles are in doubt. They ask Him what He means. He does not explain by saying that He is speaking of a memorial only, or of a figure, or of faith, but He insists on the necessity of eating His Body and drinking His Blood. All the evangelists relate it in the same words. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, describes it in the same manner. Is it not strange that our Lord and all the evangelists, writing on so many different occasions, should use the identical words and never once intimate that it was a figure?

In a word, if the Eucharist is not God, Jesus Christ has deceived the world, buried it in idolatry and vice, and left us without hope. God forbid! And why should He not give us His Body and Blood? We must adore the Holy Eucharist, as we do the Blessed Trinity, with supreme worship, and not with the relative homage that we render to the angels and saints, or even to the Mother of God.

As God, Christ fills all creation and is intimately present in all places and things. It is as God and man

that He exists in this wonderful mystery and merits the homage of all angels and men. So explicitly is this doctrine taught that during almost sixteen centuries it was everywhere believed, and is believed at this day by nearly every Christian community except the Protestant sects. It is cherished by the vast Russian Empire, the Greeks, the Nestorians, the Chaldeans, the Armenians, the Abyssinians; and all these, though separated from us for more than a thousand years, believe it, as do more than two hundred millions of Catholics. Like the pyramid in the desert, it gathers under its base all the civilization and greatness, equally as all the tribes and nations, of the earth.

Jesus Christ is the living heart and soul of the Church, which explains the solemnity of our ceremonies, the splendor of our vestments, the beauty of our altars, the grandeur of our church edifices, because we build them, not for ourselves, but for God in the tabernacle. The celibacy of our clergy, the detachment of our monks and nuns, and the devotion of all our faithful are the consequences of this marvelous faith.

It equalizes all the human race: the pope and the layman, the king and the peasant, the rich and the poor, all sit at the same table. Faith, hope, and charity finally meet

here, and all other virtues. If the greatest sinner living went to his confession, received absolution and the Holy Communion worthily, our first theologian says he could be canonized. Protestantism is a loose name. Formerly it was definite; now it implies the thousand sects who, though divided among themselves deny the Church of God. Every Christian community in the world holds this faith with this one exception of Protestants. So expressly was it taught that it was not expressly denied until the eleventh century.

All the vast Russian Empire presses it to its heart, from Behring Strait and the Aleutian Islands and on to Moscow. The Nestorian, the Armenians, the Chaldean, and all Oriental sects, even Theodore of Abyssinia, though separated from us more than a thousand years, hold this faith as firmly as Leo XIII. Some two hundred and fifty millions living today believe it, and I hope would, like me or any American Catholic priest, die for it. Our poor isolated sects have some flashes of the truth when they speak of ministers, communion, the Lord's Supper, and such other vague terms. It is difficult to believe how good God is; and this attribute is a temptation to faith, and its greatest.

It has pleased God to make this world the theatre of His most

wonderful works, and He has honored some places on this poor earth with special manifestations of His presence. It is our duty to display a special devotion to these holy places.

Jacob built an altar at Bethlehem, where he was favored with a miraculous vision. Moses at the burning bush, David before the ark, and Solomon in his temple paid their most profound adoration to the majesty of Heaven, that visited and blessed these things and places.

These visits were but transitory, and cannot be compared to the real and permanent presence of the Almighty on our altars in all places and in all times, every moment day and night. The Holy Eucharist is not a figure nor a symbol, but Jesus Christ true God true man, who was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, transfigured on Thabor, agonized in the garden, crucified on Mount Calvary, who rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, is adored by angels, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Must we not be overwhelmed with a sense of unworthiness when we kneel before the tabernacle or approach Him in the Holy Communion? Our miseries and weakness must cause us to exclaim with St Peter: *Depart from me, for*

*I am a sinful man, O Lord!* But He bears our infirmities and bids us come to Him.

We should honor and love Him the more in the Blessed Sacrament because, in order to be with us, He has not only wrought His greatest wonders, but He has divested Himself of all His splendors and submitted to the greatest indignities. He is unnoticed and neglected even by His true believers, denied by others, contemned and blasphemed by millions.

In former times, when the divine Majesty deigned to visit and speak to us, He was always clad in many of His splendors, showing Himself to be nature's God. Our first parents hide themselves among the trees and caves of Eden; Jacob is filled with awe under the starry heavens of Mesopotamia; Moses and all Israel in the desert fear and tremble, and Elias is awe-struck on Horeb.

In the humiliations of His mortal life heaven and earth and all nature, in one universal voice, proclaim the present Deity. The priest holds the Sacred Host between two fingers, exhibits Him to us, and says: *Behold the Lamb of God.* Life itself gives no sign of life; He who bears up the weight of the universe needs support or He will fall to the ground. The Eternal

Word is silent, man is silent, angels are silent, reason is silent, the senses are silent. And justly; for all creatures should be silent before the face of the Lord.

But the faith of the Catholic is eloquent and its sound fills the world. We know who He is: He is our Lord and master, our friend, our lover, our Creator and Redeemer, our first beginning and our last end, the companion of our exile, the infinite God with all His divine perfections. We should often visit Him, we should profoundly adore Him and receive Him worthily; then should we experience, in a measure, the happiness of the disciples on Thabor; *Lord, it is good for us to be here.* The Three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity are present in the Holy Eucharist, the pledge and foretaste of eternal life.

In the Blessed Eucharist our Lord restores to us the humanity He had received from us in the splendors of His glory, thus fitting us to be the tabernacles of the Blessed Trinity for evermore. God bestows on us not only all that He possesses and will ever create, but His own self with all His Infinite perfections.

Grace is a participation of the divine nature — and He communicates Himself to us by its principal gifts, which are faith, hope, and

charity, by which, says a renowned theologian, we are not only made like to God, but He also is united with us. The communication is perfected in heaven by the gifts of glory. By these gifts we not only attain the highest possible similitude to God, but become deiform, shining like the Divinity and exhibiting the most perfect image of the Blessed Trinity. By the light of glory, continues the theologian, we are made like the Father; by the vision of the divine essence and divine Persons we are made like the Son; by beatific love we are made like the Holy Ghost; by joy and the participation of the divine attributes we become like the Godhead in beatitude.

O happy home, bosom of the most Holy Trinity! when shall we reach thee? *Mane nobiscum, Domine, quia advesperascit.*

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! For of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things to Him be glory forever. Amen (Romans xi 33, 36).

# Our Best Friend

TRANSLATED BY BERNARD A. HAUSMANN, S.J.

FROM THE GERMAN BY CHRISTIAN PESCH, S.J.

## CHAPTER IV

### A Generous Friend

*“I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10).*

1. *The perfection of friendship embraces many degrees. It is characteristic of all friendship that it is rooted in the love of benevolence and that service for a reward has no part in it. One who works for another for a wage cannot on this ground be called his friend no matter to what extent he procures the advantage of his employer. To work for wages is certainly not wrong. Inviolable fidelity in serving an employer, eagerness to satisfy one's obligations to him as perfectly as possible, are excellent qualities and even virtues in any servant or employee. Indeed, it may, and not infrequently does, happen that such complete dedication to the interests of the employer transcends the bounds of paid service and develops gradually into true friendship.*

Our relationship to our divine

Saviour is of a similar nature. He is our God, and even in the most abject humiliation to which He has subjected Himself in His human nature for love of us, the majesty of His divinity remains untarnished. All angels and all men must serve Him, for the command: “Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God” is a fundamental law of nature from which God Himself cannot dispense a creature. Consequently, in our relationship to God, we must seek the answer to the question: “Who is the faithful and prudent servant?” (Mt. 24:45.) The sentence on the Day of judgment will be: “Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter thou into the joy of thy Master” (Mt. 25:21).

But this service, too, can transcend the bounds of labor for a reward; in fact, because of its very nature, it must develop into a true friendship. Our Saviour, indeed, taught us to expect a reward for our good deeds; for the Son of man will come to judge all, “and then He will

render to every one according to his conduct” (Mt. 16:27); “rejoice and exult, because your reward is great in heaven” (Mt. 5:12). And this great reward? What can it be if it be not God Himself? To possess God in perfect knowledge, love, and joy will be our reward. The perfection of our possession of God in heaven will be perfectly proportioned to the perfection of our service of Him while on earth. Just as star differs from star in glory, so, too, will the love of God, the joy in the possession of God differ in each of the blessed. Nevertheless, each one will be perfectly happy, because each one possesses God to the full measure of his capacity obtained with the help of grace while on earth.

Hence our relation to God as His servants is, in the order of divine providence, the beginning of perfect friendship. We serve God to work out our salvation, that is, to be able one day so to know and love God that through this knowledge and love all the yearning of our heart for happiness may be satisfied. God Himself and His glorification through our knowledge and love of Him is the end of our service. Consequently, there is no

opposition between our service of God with its resultant reward, and friendship with God. God has explicitly promised that He would love His faithful servants even in this life and come to them and make His abode with them (cf. Jn. 14:23). What is this if it be not friendship with us?

The greater the progress a soul makes in holiness, the more foreign to it becomes all thought of its own advantage, and the more God occupies the center of its thoughts and desires. Great, burning love is sufficient reward unto itself. It knows no other reward. There have been saints who loved God so intensely that they forgot themselves entirely and lived only in and for God. “Happy is the man,” says St. Bernard, “who has advanced so far that he can love himself only for God’s sake; who, intoxicated with divine love, forgets himself to hasten to God, to unite himself to Him, to become one spirit with Him. Such heights of sanctity are reached by but few here below. Hence, the Saint continues: “I call that man blessed to whom such an experience is accorded only occasionally or even but once in a lifetime for but one fleeting moment of time.”” But even

if an individual could pass his whole life in such an ecstasy of love, if would, nevertheless, be true that the whole advantage of this purest love of God accrues to him, that he profits by it for all eternity, and that, in this instance also, his blessedness for all eternity is a reward exceeding great.

There is but one Man who loved and loves without compensation, who with all His love wishes only to secure the well-being and happiness of His friends, and who, therefore, possesses a purely unselfish, generous love of benevolence. This man is our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *The love of our Saviour toward us is actually a purely unselfish, generous love.* No man has ever actualized so fully the Scriptural dictum: "Charity . . . is not self-seeking" (1 Cor. 13:5). Christ, says the Apostle, did not please Himself, but for love of us underwent the greatest reproaches (cf. Rom. 15:3). He came to seek and to save that which was lost (cf. Lk. 19:10) and to lay down His life for His own (cf. Jn. 10:15). He sacrificed everything for our sakes.

What advantage could accrue to Christ because of His .boundless

love? Could we give Him anything that He did not have; or was it not rather the abyss of our misery and wretchedness which drew Him into our midst? From the heart of the mercy of God our Saviour visited us, a veritable sun, which rose in the spiritual firmament to enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death (cf. Lk. 1:78, 79). Certainly the light could not expect to receive an increase of brightness from darkness, it could only communicate its brightness. Our Saviour's lot was humiliation, hardship, suffering, and death on the cross; all the advantage was ours.

Or did Christ receive a reward for His noble, self-sacrificing love which was not already His due? What is it that puts Christ on a pinnacle, so that He is without comparison the most excellent of men? We speak here not of His divinity but only of His humanity. The most essential of all the prerogatives of Christ's humanity and the foundation of all the others is His intimate union with the divinity. Did the humanity of Christ receive this divine prerogative as a reward for its merits? Certainly not. At the very first moment of its existence, the humanity of

Christ was united to the divinity. This union, therefore, was not to be, nor could it be, merited. Merit presupposes existence; the humanity of Christ, however, never had existed independently of the Second Person of the Trinity, but only in this divine Person. Hence it could not first merit and then be united to this Person. This union with a divine person was an unmerited gift of grace for the humanity of Christ.

In this personal union with the divinity, the right to all the other divine prerogatives is contained. Hence, even as a babe in the crib at Bethlehem, Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision in such fullness as is never accorded to a mere creature. Could God have denied to the humanity of Christ, even temporarily, that vision which at the same time He accorded the angels, subjects of the heavenly King far below Him? For in Christ we do not find two Sons of God, one by nature, whom the Father generated from all eternity, and one by adoption; no, Christ according to His human and divine nature is the only Son of God, the only-begotten Son of the Father. Hence, even according to His humanity, the inheritance of heaven and of eternal felicity is His by birthright; He need not

first merit this reward.

Nevertheless it is true that the beatific vision was enjoyed by Christ only in the superior part of His soul during His life on earth; His body and even His soul insofar as it was the principle of the life of the body had as yet no part in this beatitude. That Christ renounced for our sakes these secondary effects of the beatific vision in order that He might suffer and die for us, is an incomprehensible mystery of His love for us. The Apostle makes use of this conduct of our Saviour to exemplify how true love seeks not its own advantage but that of others. For this is the mind of Christ who had no need to consider it robbery to be equal with God, but who could have manifested externally the glory of God which dwelt within Him. But He preferred to deprive Himself of this glory on His appearance in the midst of men and to hide the splendor of the divine majesty which dwelt within Him. He assumed the form of a servant and in externals was found capable of suffering as other men (cf. Phil. 2:5 ff.). Indeed, the least of men, a worm and no man was He found at the time of His sacred passion.

We must concede, of course, that

as a result Christ could, to a certain extent, merit the glorification of His humanity and the honor of His name; more, it is certain that He did. "We see Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of His having suffered death" (Heb. 2:9). Because He was obedient even unto the death of the cross "God also has exalted Him, and has bestowed upon Him a name that is above every name; so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth: and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

In regard to this merit, however, two considerations must not be forgotten. First, we did not reward Christ for His merits. We have not transfigured His Body nor glorified His Name. Christ never expected nor received any advantage from us. In our regard Christ is wholly an unselfish friend who wishes to give without any prospect of ever receiving.

Second, the merits of Christ are by no means a necessary condition for His acquiring the gifts of God as is the case with us. His merits simply constitute a new title, but by no means the first or the most essential title. All the glory that

Christ merited for His humanity belonged to it even without merit, because He is by nature the Son of God. Christ once prayed: "And now do Thou, Father, glorify Me" (Jn. 17:5); but He added at once: "with the glory that I had with Thee before the world existed." This glory the Son possessed long before there was question of any merit; in itself it is also a prerogative of His humanity. But of this glory He deprived Himself for a time in order that He might be able to suffer and to die for us. At the end of His mortal life He again demanded it of His heavenly Father, first, as His just inheritance and, secondly, as a reward for His obedient fulfillment of the divine will. Even among men there is the proverb: "Earn the inheritance of your father to possess it." In other words, make yourself, through your own efforts, worthy of the inheritance which is yours by disposition of fortune, so that it may be yours by a twofold title, that of inheritance and of desert. This is proportionately true of the glory of our divine Saviour, yet with this difference: Human inheritance is subject to chance; the inheritance of our Saviour is essentially as necessary as God Himself. Consequently the proposition that the love

of our Saviour for us is a love absolutely noble and unselfish, and that by all His wonderful deeds this love sought not its own advantage but only our profit is absolutely true.

3. *What will be our attitude toward this generous love of Jesus?* True love by its very nature demands a return of love; generosity enkindles generosity. Only the craven heart is able to forget great and noble proofs of generous love, to take up an attitude of miserly craving for personal profit, and always to demand first: what shall I gain for my return of love? Our hearts in themselves are small and puny, our ability to love so weak that we are not able, even with all our energies, to return the smallest proof of love on God's part. "God is greater than our heart," says St. John (1 Jn. 3:20). We do not merely owe our Saviour this or that, we owe Him *everything*; and greater than all the created gifts that we have received from Him is the divinely human and humanly divine love of His Sacred Heart. We are indebted to Him for all that we are, because He has created us; we are doubly indebted to Him, because He has redeemed us, and redeemed us so willingly

and superabundantly; we are indebted to Him infinitely, so far as that is possible to finite creatures, because He has given us the priceless love of His Sacred Heart.

In view of all this, dare we still ask: "What will I get if I return such love with love?" Well, even this question is easily answered. Eventually the whole human race will be divided into two unequal groups both of which must appear before Jesus to do Him homage; one group, His blessed friends, will honor Him through beatific love, the other, His humbled enemies, will honor Him in helpless rage. But both must bow their knees before Him, those who are in heaven and those who are under the earth (cf. Phil. 2: 10). We must, while here on earth, determine to which of these two groups we wish to belong. This is the answer to the question: "What will it profit us, if we love our Saviour?" Of this, however, we shall speak no more. We shall henceforth consider the question: "What ought our conduct to be in regard to the noble love of the heart of Jesus, that love which is so unselfish, which seeks in all things not its own advantage

but rather our greater good?"

After Jesus had on one occasion fed more than five thousand people in the desert, many of them returned to Him the next day. We should imagine that this return would have gladdened His loving heart. But no, He reproaches them severely. "You seek Me, not because you have seen miracles and now wish to believe that I am the Messiah sent by God, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled (cf. Jn. 6:26). You hope to receive again perishable food. This is the sum and substance of your love of Me."

Alas, this tribe of seekers after the Lord has not yet perished. There are still hearts, craven hearts, who say: "I will follow Christ as long as He prospers me in temporal concerns, as long as He satisfies my wants and makes me rich, as long as He grants me health and wards off all sorrow and affliction." Shall we address such sentiments to the Saviour, who, during His temporal life, sacrificed for love of us all the riches and pleasures of earth, and chose instead poverty, labor, humiliations, and pains; who drained the chalice of suffering to the last bitter dregs?

How can we approach our divine Friend unblushingly with sentiments other than those of unconditioned devotion? My Saviour, what can I do to please Thee? Tell me, and with the help of Thy grace I will fulfill Thy every wish at all costs. For love of Thee, I shall keep Thy commandments, avoid sin, love all men, even my enemies for Thy sake, suffer adversities of whatever kind which Thou in Thy providence mayest send me, and carry my cross daily after Thee. The greater the nobility and generosity of our dealings with our Saviour, the greater, too, will be the effects of His nobility on our lives. He will see to our greater advantage even in temporal affairs. Yet we do not wish to be His friends on this account; we shall strive rather to become strangers to all love of self in His regard; to grow daily in unselfish, perfect surrender to His love, so that we may outgrow all earthly weaknesses and attain some measure of that generosity with which the heart of our Saviour is filled toward us. Then our life will be not our own, but the life of Christ Jesus in us.

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