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Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy
On an outing to the *Buffalo Religious Arts Center*

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In essentia - Unitas. In dubio - Libertas.
In omnibus - Caritas.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy

The Immaculate Heart of Mary academy school year is drawing to a close. We are a small boarding school for girls. Our original intent was for only the high school level, but we soon discovered that there was just as great a need for the middle school. This past year we had three high school girls, and three middle school girls. One will leave us to continue her studies in college, but we seem to have several more who have expressed a desire to study with us. Our primary goal is the spiritual development of our young ladies.

It has been said that the morality of a nation is only as good as the morality of its women. Our goal is primarily to do our part in shaping the morality of the few that we are able to reach. We do not desire to make religious sisters or nuns out of them – though if God led some in this direction it would be greatly welcomed. We simply want to give our young ladies a moral foundation upon which to build their lives in a way that is pleasing to Almighty God.

Sending young women into the

world with a true Catholic spirit is good for society, the Church and for the young ladies themselves. Whether they become: religious, married women and mothers, or remain in the single lay state; what is important, is that they lead lives that are pleasing to God. We need women who are not afraid to hold onto and live Catholic lives in principle as well as in spirit.

While our goal is principally spiritual, we strive to give each of them the opportunity to learn the secular sciences as well. We have invested in several secular video courses so that each student may advance at her own pace. In this manner, some have completed their studies earlier than expected. We think these courses are most useful as there is a professional in each field available on demand to explain the material. This seems to be the most cost effective method, as we cannot afford to hire so many teachers, and with the video courses and accompanying textbooks, our students can have the best instructors in each subject. In this vein we have been able to hold an online class for a few adults; and another

for a few children who all live at a distance. While this is not ideal, it is better than nothing at all. (We have been using an online program called “Go to Meeting.” This allows us to video conference, as well as show things from the host computer to all the others. It seems the main drawback is the limitation of band-width of the internet service we have.)

During the course of the year, the girls have been involved in the following activities: lessons in sewing, in making stained glass, piano, drawing; attending musical concerts, museums, etc.

It is a lot of work for one man to run this home and academy. God foresaw this need and provided us with a woman to step in and help with the shopping, arranging of chores and making schedules, keeping appointments, and many other things – which have taken a huge burden from us. Our circumstances are not ideal, but nothing is ideal on this side of eternity. Our once friary home, has taken on a drastic change as it is now filled with young women. It is however, a joy to see young life and vitality and great hope and expectation for the future.

We have learned much this past year also. It is clearer now than it has ever been just how much pressure is placed upon our young women and how many conflicting messages they must sort through in this world. To work out and find a balance in dress is much more difficult than one would at first imagine. We must protect modesty, and try not to be too Victorian. Modesty is in avoiding extremes on either side. Modesty is much more than dress and style, it is truly an attitude. Avoiding an exaggerated outdated style, and at the same time avoiding the immoral current fashions of the world, requires an understanding and wisdom far beyond the limits of material education. It requires a holy desire to be clean and neat in appearance, so as not to draw vain attention to oneself at either extreme, while respecting our bodies as sacred temples of God.

We have had to deal with some who believe that these young ladies must be constantly dressed in a Victorian style, always in a dress that is extremely feminine; or in a plain “Amish” style dress fit for simple and hard manual work. Others would have them dress in the religious garb of sisters or nuns. Of course the

world tells our young women that they must dress and act as men to be “equal” to men, and then, tells them that they are to strive to be some kind of sex goddess – wearing clothing, makeup and jewelry to attract the sexual attention of men. And, it seems, the greatest and strongest critics of women are other women. What a mine-field it is for our young ladies to try and tread the median road of modesty in all these conflicting demands. Added to all these conflicting suggestions/temptations, is the fact that it is almost impossible to find modest attire for women today.

The outward material dress is a, relatively, minor thing in the grand scheme of things. It is more important that we discover and practice modesty in our hearts and minds. If we could eliminate sin from hearts and minds, then there would be no sin in the material world around us. To the pure and innocent there is no sin or scandal. It is the intentions that we have that are important, when we make our choices for our attire and appearances. If our intentions are to seduce, then no matter how much of the body is covered, we have sinned against modesty.

If we go to the other extreme and are completely careless or indifferent about our appearance, then we have likewise sinned against modesty. Modesty applies to everything, but one more point of consideration, is our attitude. Modesty demands a median humble attitude. An exaggerated self-importance or childish enthusiasm, is just as dangerous to modesty as the exaggerated false humility of self-deprecation. Both, extremes show forth pride, and/or a desire for attention. All too often, the world caters to this vanity and thus, encourages these dangerous modes of thought and actions.

Our goal is to develop self-confident women who are not intimidated by the worldly pressures, nor are not in open rebellion against all guides or standards. We would like them to be quiet and reserved, but not intimidated and fearful. We would like them to be able to speak up for all that is right and true, but not become vainly prideful or boastful.

Of course, all that is said here concerning women, likewise, applies to men. It just seems that women have been the chief focus of this assault upon the

virtue of modesty. This is logical for the devils seek to destroy us all, and they know that they can bring down both men and women through women. “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

We have for a long time struggled over the scarcity of vocations to the clerical and religious life for our young men, and we still pray daily for those vocations. However, the opportunity presented itself to do something for our young ladies, and so we eagerly took up this task that presented itself. We knew that it was to be a difficult one (We were just not aware of how difficult it was to be.), but we also realized that with God’s grace we can do all things. We have committed to continue again next year, and with God’s

grace improve from year to year. If, through God’s grace, we in the future develop such a need for our young men; we are sure that God will likewise provide the means for them. We are few, but it is not the limits of this world or of men that we should consider, but rather, we must consider the workings of God. “All things are possible to God.” Also, we must remember, that “All things work for the good of those who love God.”

We thank all those who have lent their support, both monetarily and spiritually, and beg your continued support in prayer and alms for this worthwhile and noble task.

(If you or someone you know is interested in attending, you may contact Bishop Giles OFM in care of THE SERAPH.)

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Franciscans and the Protestant Revolution In England

Francis Borgia Steck, O.F.M.

CHAPTER VII.

BLESSED THOMAS MORE,
FRANCISCAN TERTIARY

Continued...

More's resignation meant poverty and distress for himself and his family. Deprived of his professional income, he was forced to reduce his extensive household. Having found suitable places for his servants and having disposed of all luxuries and superfluities, he told his dear ones of his plans, cheerfully adding that, if later they should have nothing to live on, "then may we yet, with bags and wallets, go a-begging together. . . . at every man's door to sing *Salve Regina*, and so still keep company and be merry together."¹ Although the family remained at Chelsea, More's poverty was so great that "he was not able for the maintenance of himself and such as necessarily belonged unto him, sufficiently to find meat, drink, fuel, apparel, and such other necessary charges."²

During these days of deep distress and dark forebodings, More's one thought was to arm himself by prayer and penance for the final struggle. Meanwhile, he

maintained a strict neutrality on the momentous questions then agitating the country. Urged on by Anne Boleyn, who hated the ex-chancellor because he had refused to be present at her coronation, the king and his wily creature Thomas Cromwell made repeated efforts to besmirch his good name. In 1533, they put his name on the bill of attainder drawn up against the Holy Maid of Kent and her adherents. But in a letter to Cromwell, More fully established his innocence.³ In like manner, the two Franciscans, FF. Rich and Risby, with whom he had conferred on the character of the Maid, declared him innocent of any dealings with her, prejudicial to his majesty. But his enemies, especially Cromwell, were eager for his ruin, and there is little doubt that he would have been executed with the nun and her party, had not the Lords begged the king on their knees to take his name from the bill and to await a more "just" cause for vengeance.

On March 30, 1534, the Act of Succession was passed.⁴ A

³ For a copy of this letter see Bridgett, pp. 323 seq.

⁴ According to this Act, the children of Anne Boleyn were to succeed to the throne. Any English subject who refused to take the oath obliging them to observe and maintain the Act in all its effects

¹ Ibidem, p. 53.

² Harpsfield, quoted by Camm, p. 188.

commission was appointed by the king before which, More was informed, he would have to appear on April 13, at Lambeth. He had previously written to Cromwell that his soul would be “in right great peril if he should follow the other side and deny the primacy to be provided by God.”⁵ Whatever others might hold, to him it was now a matter of conscience, for which he was ready to suffer all. On the morning of April 13, he attended holy Mass for the last time at Chelsea and received the sacraments. Then he bade farewell to his grief-stricken family. His own heart, too, was steeped in sorrow. “I thank our Lord the field is won,” he said to his son-in-law, William Roper, when the boat struck off from shore and he cast a last look on his beautiful Chelsea home.⁶

From a letter which he wrote to his daughter Margaret four days later, we learn how steadfastly he refused to take the oath which the commission presented to him, always maintaining that it would imperil his conscience. Accused

and contents was declared guilty of high treason. The preamble which the commissioners included in the formula of the oath declared the king’s marriage with Catherine of Aragon Invalid and his recent marriage with Anne Boleyn valid. Now, just the contrary had been officially and solemnly proclaimed by the Holy See a week previous to the passing of the Act. The oath, therefore, necessarily implied a rejection of papal authority. This explains More’s attitude.

5 See Camm, p. 194.

6 Roper, p. 71.

of obstinacy and pride in placing his own private judgment over the decision of learned and God-fearing men who had already taken the oath, More replied, “If there were no more than myself upon my side, and the whole parliament upon the other, I would be sore afraid to lean to mine own mind only against so many. But on the other side, if it so be that in some things, for which I refuse the oath, I have (as I think I have) upon my part as great a Council and a greater too, I am not then bounden to change my conscience and conform it to the Council of one realm, against the general Council of Christendom. . . . Surely as to swear to the succession I see no peril. But I thought and think it reason at to mine own oath I look well thyself, and be of counsel also in the fashion, and never intended to swear for a piece, and set my hand to the whole oath. Howbeit, as help me God, as touching the whole oath I never withdrew any man from it, nor never advised any to refuse it, nor never put, nor will put, any scruple in any man’s head, but leave every man to his own conscience. And me thinketh in good faith, that so were it in good reason that every man should leave me to mine.”⁷

7 Ibidem, p. 111. Regarding More’s refusal to take the oath of succession in the proposed form Bridgett says, “By comparing the various expressions of Sir Thomas together, it seems that he was himself deterred . . . by several reasons, some of which were doctrinal, and held by the doctors of the Church; but others were of a secret nature known to himself,

After the hearing, More was placed with the Abbot of Westminster and held there for four days. Not knowing how to proceed against his former friend and favorite, the king consulted the Council. Cranmer proposed a compromise that would save More and at the same time make it appear as if he had taken the oath. But Henry would not hear of this; he wanted More's full submission in set terms and finally, egged on by Anne Boleyn, he decided that the ex-chancellor would have to choose between taking the complete oath and going to prison. Of course, the man of God chose the latter, and on April 17, he was thrown into the Tower.

Though torn from those he loved, the valiant champion found the seclusion of prison quite to his liking. Convinced that he was suffering for a just and holy cause, he prepared himself for the day when he would be called upon to die in its defense. The prison was now his friary, where he could pray and study to his heart's content. Although in poor health, he continued his wonted mortifications. He never put off the hair-shirt and took the

and which he had never communicated to another, and would not reveal *even* to his daughter. Whether these had reference to Anne Boleyn's affinity with Henry, or her precontract of marriage with Percy, or some other impediment still more secret, we cannot now discover, any more than we know the grounds on which Cranmer pronounced that Anne's marriage with Henry had been null from the beginning" (p. 382).

discipline regularly. The *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, which he wrote in prison for the instruction and edification of his grief-stricken family, breathes the spirit of one living in most intimate union with God.

About a month after his imprisonment, he was visited by his favorite daughter Margaret. His enemies hoped that on her entreaties he would finally submit. In vain, however, did she plead and argue with him. "I believe, Megg," he said, "that they that have put me here ween that they have done me a high displeasure: but I assure thee on my faith, mine own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife and ye that be my children (whom I account the chief part of my charge) I would not have failed long ere this to have closed myself in as straight a room, and straighter too. But since I am come hither without mine own desert, I trust that God of His Goodness will discharge me of my care, and with His gracious help supply my lack among you. I find no cause, I thank God, Megg, to reckon myself in worse case than in mine own house, for me thinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on his lap and dandleth me."⁸

On another occasion, Margaret told her father that she had a letter, which proved how his persistence was alienating his friends. "What, Mistress Eve," More replied with a smile, "hath my daughter

8 Roper, p. 74.

Alington played the serpent with you, and with a letter set you to work to come and tempt your father again, and for the favor that you bear him, labor to make him swear against his conscience and send him to the devil? Daughter Margaret,” he continued, “we two have talked of this thing offer than twice or thrice. And the same tale, in effect, that you tell me now therein, and the same fear too, have you twice told me before, and I have twice answered you too, that in this matter if it were possible for me to do the thing that might content the king’s *grace*, and God therewith not offended, then hath no man taken this oath already more gladly than I would do.”⁹

What grieved him above all was the misery to which his family had been put on his account. This is evident from a letter which he wrote to Margaret about this time.

If I had not been, my dearly beloved daughter, at a firm and fast point, I trust, in God’s great

9 Ibidem, p. 119. In extenuation of Margaret’s conduct Bridgett says, “The affectionate daughter had no thought of leading her father to do what was unworthy of him. When we see one so pure and wise as Margaret Roper thus deceived (she had taken the oath with ‘the saving clause: *so far as Christ’s law allows*), we can estimate the enormity of the scandal given to the laity by the prelates and clergy, of England, and we can also estimate the magnificence of More’s loyalty to conscience, that he should be in no ways swayed by that example, thus pressed upon him by the mouth of his accomplished and beloved daughter” (p. 374).

mercy this good great while before, your lamentable letter had not a little abashed me, surely far above all other things, of which I hear divers times not a few terrible toward me . . . A deadly grief unto me, and much more deadly than to hear of mine death (for the fear thereof, I thank our Lord, the fear of hell, the hope of heaven, and the passion of Christ daily more and more assuage), is, that I perceive my good son your husband, and you my good daughter, and my good wife, and mine other good children and innocent friends, in great displeasure and danger of great harm thereby . . . Out of which (trouble) I beseech Him to bring me, when His will shall be, into His endless bliss of Heaven, and in the meanwhile, give me grace and you both, in all our agonies and troubles, devoutly to resort prostrate unto the remembrance of that bitter agony, which our Saviour suffered before His passion at the Mount. And if we diligently so do, I verily trust we shall find therein great comfort and consolation. And thus, my dear daughter, the blessed spirit of Christ, for His tender mercy, govern and guide you all, to His pleasure and to your weal and comfort, both body and soul.¹⁰

Lady More was also permitted to visit him. Unable to understand her husband’s attitude, she used all her household eloquence to bring about his submission to the king.

10 Roper, pp. 153 seq.

“What the good-yere, Master More,” she said, “I marvel that you that have been always hitherto taken for so wise a man will now so play the fool to lie here in this close, filthy prison, and be content thus to be shut up among mice and rats, *when you might be abroad at your liberty, and with the favour and good will both of the king and his council if you would but do as all the bishops and best learned of this realm have done. And seeing you have at Chelsea a right fair house, your library, your gallery, your garden, your orchard, and all other necessaries so handsome about you, where you might in the company of me your wife, your children, and household, be merry. I muse what a God’s name you mean here still thus fondly to tarry.*”

“I pray thee, good Mistress Alice,” put in More with a smile, “tell me one thing.”

“What is that?” asked his wife.

“Is not this house as nigh heaven as mine own?”

“Tylle valle, Tylle valle!”

“How say you, Mistress Alice, is it not so?”

“*Bone Deus, Bone Deus*, man, will this gear never be left?”

“Well then, Mistress Alice, if it be so, it is very well. For I see no great cause why I should much joy in my gay house, or in any thing thereunto belonging, when if I

should but seven years lie buried under the ground and then arise and come thither again, I should not fail to find some therein that would bid me get out of doors, and tell me it were none of mine. What cause have I then to like such a house as would so soon forget his master?”¹¹

As time wore on without any change in More’s attitude toward the required oath, his imprisonment became more severe. In November, 1534, the lands he had received from the king ten years before were confiscated. This made his family almost penniless. Repeatedly they appealed to Henry for assistance; but the cruel king and his minister only gloated over the sorrow they were thereby causing their dauntless prisoner in the Tower. Finally, all visits were prohibited, and what pained him most, he was no longer permitted to attend holy Mass. Despite privation and suffering, however, he was determined to persevere on the path of duty to the end. This is evident from a letter which he addressed to a priest early in January, 1535. This priest, whose name was Leader, having heard that More had relented and taken the oath, wrote to him apparently to congratulate him on his approaching deliverance from prison.

“The tale that is reported,” the prisoner replied in part, “albeit I cannot but thank you though ye

¹¹ Ibidem, pp. 81 seq.

would it were true, yet I thank God it is very vanity. And I trust in the great goodness of God that He shall never suffer it to be true. If my mind had been obstinate in deed, I would not let for any rebuke or worldly shame plainly to confess the truth; for I propose not to depend upon the fame of the world. But I thank God that the thing I do is not for obstinacy, but for the salvation of my soul, because I cannot induce mine own mind otherwise to think than I do concerning the oath. . . . If ever I should mishap to receive the oath (which I trust Our Lord shall never suffer me), ye may reckon sure that it were expressed and extorted by duress and hard handling. For all the goods of this world, I thank Our Lord I set not much more by than I do by dust. . . . I beseech Our Lord that all may prove as true faithful subjects to the king that have sworn, as I am in my mind sure they be which have refused to swear.”¹²

On April 30, 1535, we learn from his letter to Margaret, Cromwell with other members of the Council came to the Tower to exact from him a clear and definite statement regarding the king’s spiritual supremacy. Among other things they accused him of scandalizing the people by his obstinacy and threatened that the law would take its course were he to persist in his opposition to the king’s demand. Declaring that he had never sought to influence anyone in the matter of the oath, he continued,

¹² Bridgett, p. 379.

“I am the king’s true faithful subject and daily bedesman, and pray for his highness and all the realm. I do nobody no harm, I say none harm, I think none harm, but wish everybody good. And if this be not enough to keep a man alive, in good faith I long not to live. And I am dying already, and have since I came here, been divers times in the case that I thought to die within one hour. And I thank our Lord that I was never sorry for it, but rather sorry when I saw the pang past. And therefore my poor body is at the king’s pleasure. Would God my death might do him good.”¹³ A few weeks later the king’s men repeated their visit. When More again shrewdly evaded an open declaration concerning royal supremacy, his enemies accused him of cowardice, alleging that for fear of death he dared not speak his mind freely. To this the holy man made the memorable reply, “I have not been a man of such holy living that I might be bold to offer myself to death, lest God, for my presumption, might suffer me to fall; and, therefore, I put not myself forward, but draw back. Howbeit, if God draw me to it Himself, then trust I in His great mercy that He shall not fail to give me grace and strength.”¹⁴

The glorious martyrdom of the Carthusians on June 19, and that of Blessed John Fisher, three days later, made it clear to More that also his day of triumph was fast

¹³ Roper, p. 165.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 173.

approaching. Despoiled of all his books and writing material and shut up in solitary confinement, he devoted his time exclusively to prayer and mortification. But his heart was as staunch and as cheerful as ever. Asked one day by the jailer why he always kept the blind down and sat in utter darkness, he replied with a smile of sweet composure, "What should I do? When the wares are taken away, should not the shop be closed?"¹⁵

On July 1, the servant of God was taken from his cell and conducted to Westminster for trial. "To make the greater impression on the people," writes Lingard, "perhaps to add to his shame and suffering, More was led on foot, in a coarse woollen gown, through the most frequented streets, from the Tower to Westminster Hall. The color of his hair, which had lately become gray, his face, which, though cheerful, was pale and emaciated, and the staff, with which he supported his feeble steps, announced the rigor and duration of his confinement."¹⁶ His appearance in court and his subsequent reply after the indictment had been read made a deep impression on all present. Referring to the seditious utterances which Richard Rich had falsely accused him of having made during a conversation in the

Tower, the martyr said :

"If I were a man, my lords, that did not regard an oath, I need not stand in this place at this time as an accused person. And if this oath of yours, Mr. Rich, be true, then I pray that I may never see the face of God, which I would not say were it otherwise to win the whole world." Then, having repeated the conversation as it had really taken place, he continued: "In good faith, Mr. Rich, I am sorrier for your perjury than for my own peril; but neither I, nor any other man else, to my knowledge, ever took you to be a man of such credit, as that, in any matter of importance, I, or any other, would, at any time, vouchsafe to communicate with you. And I, as you know, of no small while, have been acquainted with you and your conversation, who have known you from your youth hitherto, for we long dwelled together in one parish. I am sorry you compel me so to say, that you were esteemed very light of tongue, a great dicer, and of no commendable fame. And so in your house at the Temple, where hath been your chief bringing up, were you likewise accounted.

"Can it, therefore, seem likely to your honorable lordships that I would, in so weighty a cause, so unadvisedly overshoot myself as to trust Mr. Rich, a man of me always reputed of little troth, so far above my sovereign lord the king or any of his noble councillors, that I would utter unto

15 Sander, *De Origin ac Progressu Schismatici Anglicani*, first edition (1585), p. 81; Rishton edition (1690), p. 184.

16 Lingard, *History of England* (New York, 1879), Vol. V, p. 21.

him the secrets of my conscience touching the king's supremacy, the special point at my hands so long sought for — a thing I never did, nor never would, after the statute made thereof, reveal unto the King's highness himself? Can this, in your judgment, my lords, seem likely to be true?"¹⁷

When the martyr had finished speaking, the jurymen were asked to give their verdict. After a quarter of an hour's private consultation they returned to the court room and declared the prisoner guilty of treason, whereupon the chancellor sentenced him to death by hanging, drawing, and quartering. On hearing his sentence, the holy man rose quietly from his seat. The time had now come for him to make a public profession of faith.

"Since I am condemned and God knows how," he said, "I wish to speak freely of your statute, for the discharge of my conscience. For the seven years that I have studied the matter, I have not read in any approved doctor of the Church that a temporal lord could or ought to be head of the spirituality."

"What, More," broke in the chancellor, "you wish to be considered wiser and of better conscience than all the bishops and nobles of the realm?"

"My lord," replied the martyr calmly, "for one bishop of your opinion I have a hundred saints

of mine; and for one parliament of yours, and God knows of what kind, I have all the General Councils for 1,000 years ; and for one kingdom I have France and all the kingdoms of Christendom."

At this, the Duke of Norfolk suggested that now the malice of the prisoner was clear. But More was nothing perturbed.

"What I say," he explained, "is necessary for the discharge of my conscience and satisfaction of my soul, and to this I call God to witness, the sole searcher of human hearts. I said further, that your statute is ill made, because you have sworn never to do anything against the Church, which, through all Christendom, is one and undivided, and you have no authority, without the common consent of all Christians, to make a law or Act of Parliament or Council against the union of Christendom. I know well that the reason why you have condemned me is because I have never been willing to consent to the king's second marriage; but I hope, in the Divine goodness and mercy, that, as St. Paul and St. Stephen, whom he persecuted, are now friends in Paradise, so we, though differing in this world, shall be united in perfect charity in the other. I pray God to protect the king, and give him good counsel."¹⁸

He was then brought back to prison. When Margaret waiting with other members of the family

¹⁷ Roper, pp. 86 seq.

¹⁸ Bridgett, p. 422.

at the Tower-Wharf saw her condemned father, she ran up to him, fell about his neck and kissed him. With mingled joy and sorrow he comforted and blessed her. But not satisfied, his affectionate daughter ran to him a second time; “and at last, with a full and heavy heart, was fain to depart from him: the beholding whereof was to many of them that were present thereat so lamentable, that it made them for very sorrow and weep and mourn.”¹⁹ Later, when the martyr saw that Sir William Kingston, constable of the Tower, was weeping, he said, “Good Master Kingston, trouble not yourself, but be of good cheer; for I will pray for you, and my good lady your wife, that we may meet in heaven together, where we shall be merry for ever and ever.”²⁰

No date had been fixed for his execution. But the martyr knew that the end was near and spent the remaining few days in closest union with God. To strengthen himself for the deadly conflict, he scourged his innocent flesh most severely. It is also said that he wrapped himself in a white sheet and like a corpse prepared for burial paced his gloomy cell meditating on death and eternity. On July 5, the day before his martyrdom, he sent his hair-shirt to Margaret together with a letter which was written with a charred stick and read in part:

Our Lord bless you, good daughter,

19 Roper, p. 97.

20 Ibidem, p. 96.

and your good husband, and your little boy, and all yours, and all my children, and all my godchildren and all our friends. . . I cumber you, good Margaret, much, but I would be sorry if it should be any longer than tomorrow, for it is St. Thomas’ Eve, and the Utas of St. Peter; and, therefore, to-morrow long I to go to God. It were a day very meet and convenient for me. I never liked your manner toward me better than when you kissed me last; for I love when daughterly love and dear charity hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy. Farewell, my dear child, and pray for me, and I shall for you and all your *friends* that we may merrily meet in heaven.²¹

It is related on the authority of Cresacre More that when the martyr was told that the king had commuted his punishment to decapitation, he replied, “God forbid the king should use any more such mercy unto any of my friends, and God bless all my posterity from such pardons.”²² July 6, as he had desired, was the day set for his execution. Early that morning, Sir Thomas Pope, a cherished friend of his, came and told him that by the king’s orders he was to die before nine o’clock. “Master Pope,” was his cheerful reply, “for your good tidings I heartily thank you. I have always been much bounden to the king’s highness for the benefits and honours that he had still from time

21 Ibidem, p. 175.

22 Bridgett, p. 431, footnote.

to time most bountifully heaped upon me; and yet more bounden am I to his grace for putting me into this place, where I have had convenient time and space to have remembrance of my end. And so help me God, most of all, Master Pope, am I bounden to his highness that it pleaseth him so shortly to rid me out of the miseries of this wretched world, and therefore will I not fail earnestly to pray for his grace, both here, and also in the world to come." When he noticed that his old friend was weeping, the martyr sought to comfort him. "Quiet yourself, good Master Pope," he said, "and be not discomfited, for I trust that we shall once in heaven see each other full merrily, where we shall be sure to live and love together, in joyful bliss eternally."²³

Bodily suffering and mental anguish had not robbed him of his characteristic cheerfulness. The prospect of heavenly bliss sustained him amid the gloom of prison life and even now made his heart leap for joy when Kingston, the lieutenant of the Tower, arrived and told him that his hour had come. Gladly, almost merrily, he followed the guards to Tower Hill, the place of execution. Noticing that the scaffold shook when he placed his foot on the ladder, he turned to Kingston and said with a smile, "I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safely up, and for my coming down let me shift for myself." With this he mounted the scaffold, and turning

to the people who had assembled in great numbers, he briefly asked them "to pray for him and to bear witness with him, that he should now suffer death in and for the faith of the Holy Catholic Church." With profound devotion he recited the psalm *Miserere*. As was customary, the executioner begged his forgiveness; whereupon the martyr kissed him tenderly and said, "Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office: my neck is very short, take heed, therefore, thou strike not awry, for saving of thine honesty."²⁴ Then having blindfolded his eyes with a cloth he had brought with him, he knelt down at the block. The executioner had already raised the ax, when the holy man, as Cresacre relates, signed for a moment's delay, and put aside his beard, saying that it had not committed treason.²⁵ Then he once more laid his head on the block, and while his lips moved in prayer, the fatal blow was dealt that won for him the crown of martyrdom.

King Henry was playing at backgammon with Anne Boleyn when a messenger came and informed him that the execution had taken place. Remorse seems to have filled his black soul; for turning to his worthless paramour, he said bitterly, "Thou art the cause of this man's death."²⁶ Whole Europe stood aghast on learning

24 Ibidem, p. 101.

25 Bridgett, p. 435, footnote.

26 Camm, p. 237; also Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, Vol. II, p. 670.

23 Roper, pp. 99 seq.

that the former Chancellor of England had suffered death at the block. Roper relates that when Emperor Charles V heard of it, he said to the English ambassador, "Had we been master of such a servant, of whose doings ourselves have had these many years no small experience, we would rather have lost the best city of our dominions, than have lost such a worthy councillor."²⁷

Thus lived and died the great Tertiary Chancellor of England, "loyal to his sovereign to the last, yet giving his life for the higher loyalty he owed to the Vicar of Christ, and bearing himself in every relation of life with the free-hearted joyfulness of one for whom no earthly pleasures, cares, or trials could cloud over the blue horizon beyond which lay the vision of God."

Harpsfield informs us that the martyr's head was impaled on London Bridge. Here, according to Stapleton, it remained "for a

27 Roper, p. 102.

month, when Margaret Roper bribed the man whose business it was to throw it into the river to give it to her." With the consent of the Council, she preserved it in a leaden vessel. What became of the precious relic after her death in 1544, is not known. As to the martyr's body, we are told that by order of the governor it was given to Margaret who with the assistance of her former maid, Dorothy Harris, and her adopted sister, Margaret Clements, buried it in the chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula in the Tower. "The spot pointed out at present," we learn from Bridgett, "is near the entrance to the small bell-tower; and if that was the resting-place of the holy ashes, they will not have been removed to the vaults, as was the case with those in the nave, when the church was repaired in 1876."²⁸ By the decree of Pope Leo XIII, dated December 29, 1886, the illustrious Tertiary martyr was enrolled among the Blessed.

28 Bridgett, pp. 435 seq.

NOTE:

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

Modernism and Socialism

Part II

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

Holy Mother Church has always desired to look after the faithful in a number of different ways. One of the more important in recent years is to warn the clergy and laity of certain dangers, whether within or outside the Church.

In the latter part of 19th century and well into the 20th, the Catholic Popes of that time warned the faithful about the errors of Socialism and Communism. From Pope Pius IX to Pope Pius XII, Rome warned Catholics of the grave dangers which existed and the result if the warnings were ignored. One of the earliest methods attempted by the socialists, and it is still used today, is *to deceive Catholics in such a way that they believe they are good Catholics, but all the while their beliefs are changed to the extent that, doctrinally, they form a new church.* Does this sound familiar?

This first quote comes to us from Pope Pius IX in his Encyclical, *Nostis et Nobiscum* (Dec. 8, 1849). It was written for the people of Italy but applies to everyone. “*You are aware*

indeed, that the goal of this most iniquitous plot is to drive people to overthrow the entire order of human affairs and to draw them over to the wicked theories of this Socialism and Communism, by confusing them with perverted teachings. But these enemies realize that they cannot hope for any agreement with the Catholic Church, which allows neither tampering with truths proposed by faith, nor adding any new human fictions to them. This is why they try to draw the Italian people over to Protestantism, which in their deceit they repeatedly declare to be only another form of the same true religion of Christ, thereby just as pleasing to God. Meanwhile they know full well that the chief principle of the Protestant tenets, i.e., that the holy scriptures are to be understood by the personal judgment of the individual, will greatly assist their impious cause. They are confident that they can first misuse the holy scriptures by wrong interpretation to spread their errors and claim God's authority while doing it. Then they can cause men to call into

doubt the common principles of justice and honor.”

Immediately one is able to see the connection between Socialism and Modernism. Both desire to undermine and destroy the Catholic Faith by first diluting it, and then work to further deceive the faithful in such a way that they don't know the difference between truth and error. This is a spiritual poison which Pope Pius IX recognized in the 19th century.

As we have seen the destruction take place within the Catholic Church, so did Pope Leo XIII foresee it within the realm of society. *“We speak of that sect of men who, under various and almost barbarous names, are called socialists, communists, or nihilists, and who, spread over all the world, and bound together by the closest ties in a wicked confederacy, no longer seek the shelter of secret meetings, but, openly and boldly marching forth in the light of day, strive to bring to a head what they have long been planning – the overthrow of all civil society whatsoever. Surely, these are they who, as the sacred Scriptures testify, “Defile the flesh, despise dominion and blaspheme majesty.” –*

Encyclical *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, December 28, 1878.

It is worth noting here of the same demonic goals of the socialists and those of the Masonic Sect. It is a known fact over the years that Freemasons have been Communists and Socialists, and vice versa, both working for the same end – spiritual death and destruction throughout the world.

From the same encyclical comes a passage that if one didn't know better, he might think it was written in the past twenty years. *“They (socialists, communists, or nihilists) debase the natural union of man and woman, which is held sacred even among barbarous peoples; and its bond, by which the family is chiefly held together, they weaken, or even deliver up to lust. Lured, in fine, by the greed of present goods, which is ‘the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith’ (1 Timothy: 6; 10, 3), they assail the right of property sanctioned by natural law; and by a scheme of horrible wickedness, while they seem desirous of caring for the needs and satisfying the desires of all men, they strive to seize and hold in common whatever has been*

acquired either by title of lawful inheritance, or by labor of brain and hands, or by thrift in one's mode of life." – Encyclical *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, December 28, 1878.

It is clear from these passages that communists and socialists have no concern for the natural rights of men. Under the pretended purpose of caring for the poor, these godless men enslave the common man both literally and financially; destroy the middle class and proceed to undermine the very foundations of society. All the while they want the 'uninformed masses' to believe that heaven has come to earth!

Pope Pius X brought to the public eye that which would seem unthinkable – misguided Catholics who promote Socialism, believing this is the manner in which society ought to be formed. *"But stranger still, alarming and saddening at the same time, are the audacity and frivolity of men who call themselves Catholic and dream of re-shaping society under such conditions, and of establishing on earth, over and beyond the pale of the Catholic Church, 'the reign of love and justice' ...*

What are they going to produce? ... A mere verbal and chimerical construction in which we shall see, glowing in a jumble, and in seductive confusion, the words Liberty, Justice, Fraternity, Love, Equality, and human exultation, all resting upon an ill-understood human dignity. It will be a tumultuous agitation, sterile for the end proposed, but which will benefit the less Utopian exploiters of the peoples. Yes, we can truly say that the Sillon, its eyes fixed on a chimera, brings Socialism in its train." – Apostolic Letter *Notre Charge Apostolique* to the French bishops, August 25, 1910, condemning the movement *Le Sillon*.

It is quite apparent in hindsight that many Catholics, especially the Modernists, ignored this warning. There have been an ever-increasing number of those who call themselves Catholic who are, in fact, Socialists. At times they are known as Communists, Marxists, Liberals or Progressives, but it all centers around the errors of Socialism. This clearly explains why so many, if not most, 'Catholic' politicians are actually Socialists. It should also be noted of the many Socialist

and Communist bishops that have permeated the Modernist Church. Once again, keep in mind the ideological connection between the Socialists and the Modernists. Frankly, when one places society and the Church side by side over the last fifty years, he will see similarities which are quite frightening. This is simply because the same error is being used to “fundamentally transform” the Church and State.

There is one last point to be made for the purposes of this article. It is the contradiction which exists between Catholic doctrine and Socialism. You will see in the three quotes which follow from Pope Pius XI how important it is for the lay Catholic to know their Faith well, i.e., well enough so as not to be fooled by the human agents of Satan who are nothing more than wolves in sheep’s clothing.

“ For Socialism which could then be termed almost a single system and which maintained definite teachings reduced into one body of doctrine, has since then split chiefly into two sections, often opposing each other and even bitterly hostile, without either one however abandoning a position fundamentally contrary

*to Christian truth that was characteristic of Socialism.” – Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931.*

*“But what if Socialism has really been so tempered and modified as to the class struggle and private ownership that there is in it no longer anything to be censured on these points? Has it thereby renounced its contradictory nature to the Christian religion? This is the question that holds many minds in suspense. And numerous are the Catholics who, although they clearly understand that Christian principles can never be abandoned or diminished seem to turn their eyes to the Holy See and earnestly beseech Us to decide whether this form of Socialism has so far recovered from false doctrines that it can be accepted without the sacrifice of any Christian principle and in a certain sense be baptized. That We, in keeping with Our fatherly solicitude, may answer their petitions, We make this pronouncement: Whether considered as a doctrine, or an historical fact, or a movement, **Socialism, if it remains truly Socialism**, even after it has yielded to truth and justice on the points which we have mentioned,*

cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth.” – Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931.

“Socialism is based nevertheless on a theory of human society peculiar to itself and irreconcilable with true Christianity. Religious socialism, Christian socialism, are contradictory terms; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist.” – Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931.

The sad fact is, in 2014, socialism has spread throughout the world in a variety of different forms, including as mentioned above as ‘Christian Socialism.’ Citizens of this country (USA) are today more willing to accept a “soft socialism” after being spoon-fed it over the past several decades. Among the methods used has been a “dialectic” approach, i.e., while “condemning Communism” and promoting “democracy,” the masses are slowly introduced to a Socialism which they believe is real freedom. Through over-regulation, high taxation

and stripping basic freedoms (speech, press, etc.) via political correctness, we are a free country in name only.

It is imperative the True Catholic understands what has, and continues to take place in the Church and State. This situation has been occurring for many years but also continues to fool naïve and ignorant Catholics. The heresy of Modernism, which most believe is only concerned with religion, brings with it a disguised socialism which actually forms the backbone of the heresy.

It is indeed a two-headed monster which parades itself as a type of a Pied Piper and wolf in sheep’s clothing all in one. It has been proven to be a spiritually lethal combination which has left a scorched-earth policy in its wake.

One is left to understand that the enemies of Holy Mother Church are relentless. They are quite adept at presenting one with a deceptive smile (the “church” of love, peace and justice) while they slip a knife into one’s heart and soul.

Vocations

Bishop Giles OFM

Dear sons and daughters of the Catholic Faith,

There is a great need in the Church today for clerical and religious vocations. Is God calling you?

A vocation is not something that we decide for ourselves. Men and women do not choose God, it is God Who chooses us. The world suggests to us that we find a vocation that we like – find something that we enjoy doing. There is a grain of truth in this, but the majority of it is false. It is a false premise. It is not in doing our own will that we find happiness. True happiness will only be ours in the measure that we sacrifice our own wills and do the will of God. Only God knows what is best for us, and He has a plan for each of us. True happiness can only be found in finding out what God wants from us and then in faithfully fulfilling our role in His plan.

How will we know what His plan is for us? This is where the above mentioned “grain of truth” comes in. God has given to each of us different and various gifts of talents or attributes. One sign of God’s will for us is that we are naturally good at something or enjoy doing something. Yet, this

is a small part when it comes to discovering God’s will for us. Very often God’s will is manifested to us by the circumstances that are beyond our control. For the unemployed person who cannot find a job that he is trained for or prepared for, very often he is given an opportunity for a job he would otherwise never have considered. In taking that job, even though it is not what he wanted, he finds God’s will for him and even greater happiness than he would have had otherwise.

Jesus reminds us that He came not to do His own will, but to do the will of His Father. The Gospels tell us that He was obedient even unto death. He also invites us to take up a daily cross and follow Him.

To the world, a cross and obedience, are hard and painful; but those who embrace them for the love of God find peace and comfort for their souls. God makes the “hard” things, easy, light, and sweet. Our lives might be compared to a woman about to give birth. She is sorrowful that the hour has come and she must endure the pain and suffering of childbirth, but her sorrow is soon turned into joy. During our lives

here on earth we must struggle to give a spiritual birth to our souls. There is great pain and suffering as we carry the daily cross, but there is greater joy for those who will persevere to the end.

Also, our physical fitness often is an indication to us of the direction in life that God wishes for us to take. The strong and healthy people who enjoy working with their hands and being outdoors, and find themselves with opportunities of work in these areas, can generally conclude that it is God's will for them to do so. Those of a more delicate health or disposition, may be called to a quieter indoor labor.

All too often, we find that God closes doors on many of the things that we want to do. This may just be God's way of saying that this is not what He wants us to do. There is a saying that where God closes a door, He opens a window. We must then look out that window and see another direction to take that will probably be more pleasing to God, simply because it is not our own will that we are seeking at that point.

In the religious life, there is a place for just about every type and personality. There is a place for those whom God calls to teach. There is the potential for religious

to obtain any degree of education that God may will and teach at any level, from little children to the highest university levels. For those who desire to work in health care, the religious again can work with expecting mothers, newborns and all the way to assisting the elderly in their last days. Social work is likewise a part of the religious' world. For those God calls to solitary or contemplative life, there is a place in religion for them too. The simple and common laborer also finds a place in religious life, as there is always a great need for the lay-brother. The religious life is especially beneficial to the clerical state too. So, even the priest will find great blessings in the religious life.

Our world today focuses so much attention upon "freedom" and one's own will that we forget that God's will trumps everything. The religious is one who has or is discovering this profound truth. The religious makes vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. He places himself as an infant in the hands of God. He strives to become the clay in the Potter's hands. The clay does not tell the potter what he should be, rather the potter tells the clay what he wants it to be. The religious who has given his will over to God in

holy obedience, loses nothing, and gains everything. What he thought would bring happiness often only brought misery and suffering. When he finally makes the sacrifice and gift of his own will, as painful as it may be, he discovers the greatest joys and pleasures.

We are looking for young people who are ready to renounce the empty vanity of the world and their own dis-ordered self-will, for the love of God. God is calling those who are looking for something more than this world has to offer. A religious needs a generous heart that is ready to help others for the love of God. Those who are afraid of work or sacrifice need not apply.

We do not have to be perfect to enter into the religious life. We must however desire to work at becoming perfect. "Be ye perfect, because your heavenly Father is perfect." We need not think that because we suffer violent or evil temptations or have even fallen into sin that we do not have a vocation. On the contrary, very often those who suffer the greatest assaults are those that God is calling.

The devils see the good that certain souls can do in the service of God, and they pull out all the

stops in their attacks against those souls. Grave temptations or weakness is not, therefore a sign against a religious vocation, but may be an indication that God has a greater plan for them. There must however be a sincere and strong desire not to offend God and to overcome these temptations. If someone, however, cannot overcome the desires of the flesh, St. Paul would have them marry. In this manner they will have a good and virtuous outlet for their desires, rather than have their souls burn eternally in Hell.

If someone is young and has average health and intelligence; as well as an inclination to pursue something more than this world has to offer; and is ready, willing, and able to make great sacrifices of himself for the love of God; then he or she should seriously consider the clerical and/or religious life.

If this is you, do not put it off any longer, contact your pastor as soon as you can. We need to answer the call when it is given, not when we get around to it. It may mean great sacrifice for us, but we must remember that God will not be outdone in generosity. God will reward our sacrifices a hundred fold in this life, and give us life eternal in the next.

Franciscan Saints

JUNE 10

BLESSED LAWRENCE OF VILLAMAGNA

Confessor, First Order

Lawrence was born May 15, 1476, at Villamagna, a large country estate near Ortona in the Abruzzi, Italy, of parents who were distinguished not only for the nobility of their birth but equally much for the virtue of their lives.

At an early age Lawrence decided to join the Franciscan Order and took the habit in the convent of Our Lady of Grace in the city of Ortona. His father was much displeased at his step and had his son seized and locked up. When presently, however, his father became more composed, Lawrence succeeded in overcoming his objections, and returned in haste to the convent where he was professed in the Order of the Friars Minor.

After his ordination to the priesthood, he preached all over Italy with remarkable success. In this ministry he converted very many people with his words and example. Indeed it was less because of the eloquence of his speech,

than by reason of the sanctity and austerity of his life and his devotion to prayer. God favored him with the gift of prophecy. He was greatly venerated by the people, who proclaimed him a saint.

Finally, while he was conducting the Lenten sermons at Ortona, he was stricken in the pulpit. Within a short time he slept in the Lord on June 6, 1535. The veneration always tendered Blessed Lawrence was confirmed by Pope Pius XI on February 28, 1923. His feast is observed on June ninth.

ON SUDDEN DEATH

1. In the Epistle to the Hebrews St. Paul writes (9:27): "It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." Death, then, is certain, but the time of death is uncertain. We do not know when we shall die. So often death comes like a thief in the night, when we least expect it. In the "Following of Christ" we read (1:23): "How many

souls have been deceived and snatched unexpectedly from life! Such a one fell by the sword, another was drowned, another falling from on high broke his neck; this man died at table, another came to his end at play, and so death is the end of all and man's life passeth away suddenly like a shadow." For that reason he adds the exhortation: "Be therefore always in readiness and so live that death may not find thee unprepared." — If death's summons came to you today, would you be prepared?

2. Consider that it is not a sudden death we should fear, but rather that a sudden death may find us unprepared to appear before our Judge. For thus we pray in the Litany of All Saints: From sudden and unprovided death, deliver us, O Lord. The uncertainty of the day and hour of our death should impel us so to live that we may always be prepared to die. "Many die suddenly and unprovidedly," the author of the "Imitation" again says. The best preparation for death is a holy life, for he adds: "Study, therefore, so to live now that in the hour of death thou

mayest be able rather to rejoice than to fear. Do now, beloved, do now what thou canst; for thou knowest not when thou art to die." - Let us daily ask God in prayer for the grace to be conscientious in our work, faithful to His grace, attentive at prayer, regular in frequenting the sacraments, and constant in the performance of those good works and the practice of those virtues which are proper to our state in life, so that if in His designs we are to meet with sudden death, we may at least be prepared to meet Him in that sacred moment when we depart hence.

3. Consider that a sudden death is not necessarily anything tragic. It may be a blessing and a reward for a life that has been spent in holiness. Cardinal Newman once wrote:

"Death came unheralded: --
but it was well; For so
thy Saviour bore
Kind witness, thou wast meet
at once to dwell On His
eternal shore;
All warnings spared,
For none He gives where hearts
are for prompt Change
prepared."

Our good God spares such

souls the agony that usually accompanies death. They do not have to witness the grief of loved ones standing by, they are spared the struggle with the angel of darkness in that final hour, they are not subjected to the pains of sickness nor to the pangs of lengthened agony. Truly such a death may be called a gift from God. We who are children of a saint who called death by the familiar name of sister, would do well to cultivate a similar attitude towards death. If we

lead a holy life by following the path he marked out for us in the rule, we may, like him, joyfully exclaim, "Welcome, Sister Death!" no matter when the summons comes.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O God, who dost gladden us through the merits and intercession of Blessed Lawrence, Thy confessor, grant, we beseech Thee, that we who ask Thy benefits may obtain Thy graces. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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

**LET YOUR BLESSINGS
CONTINUE TO BLESS OTHERS BY
REMEMBERING THE FRANCISCANS AND THEIR WORK IN
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TRANSLATED BY BERNARD A. HAUSMANN, S.J.

FROM THE GERMAN BY CHRISTIAN PESCH, S.J.

CHAPTER XIV

Faithful Unto Death

“Be ye steadfast and unmovable, my beloved brethren, in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58)

Our Saviour accompanies us through life with His means of grace. The efficacious love of the heart of Jesus for man begins with the first days of man’s life. Hardly has the child opened its eyes to the light of this world when our Saviour appears on the scene to work miracles of grace in its soul; and He does not leave it until the last breath has been drawn. The friendship of Jesus endures even unto death. There is a wealth of meaning in the phrase, “faithful unto death,” so easily enunciated, but so difficult of execution. It has been verified in the friendship of our Saviour as it never has been verified in any other friendship. St. John tells us in the Apocalypse that he heard our Saviour called “faithful and true” (19:11). And since He is faithful and true, He will complete the work of salvation which He has begun in us

(cf. Thess. 5:24).

At our entrance into this world, we were separated from Christ because of the stain of original sin, and unable to go to Him. But Christ came to us in holy baptism as though He had been waiting longingly for us. Who baptized us? A priest? Certainly. But the priest was but an instrument in the hands of a Higher One. A priest of himself can neither cleanse the soul from sin, nor produce in it sanctifying grace. Only our Lord and God can do that. St. Augustine emphasizes the fact that Christ has not ceased to baptize. He writes: “He it is who baptizes in the Holy Ghost; He has not ceased to baptize, but still baptizes, not through physical ministrations, but through the invisible activity of His majesty.”¹ Although Peter baptizes, He it is who baptizes; although Paul baptizes, He it is who baptizes; although Judas baptizes, He it is who baptizes!²

It was at baptism that Christ pressed us to His divine heart for the first time and flooded our

1 St. Augustine, *Contra litteras Petilianii* 1, 3. c. 49, n. 59.

2 Cf. *In Joan. tract.* 6. n. 7.

souls with streams of love and grace that had their source in His own heart. Before we were able to perform a single good act, He chose us from among thousands and destined us for an intimate community of life with Himself. “For as many of you,” writes St. Paul, “as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). We are in God’s eyes no longer clothed in the form of the first Adam, but in that of His only-begotten Son. Indeed we have become members of a new, mystical body, the Church, and all together constitute the mystical body of Christ. “For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body. . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and member for member” (1 Cor. 12:13, 27). Since the day of our baptism, we have been as intimately united to Christ as the members of our body are united to us. The interests of our heart are the interests of His; and the interests of His heart must be the interests of ours. Hence, we are consecrated to the heart of Jesus by the sacrament of baptism.

If a child dies immediately after baptism, it rests eternally in unspeakable bliss at the heart of its Redeemer. But the lot of the vast majority of those baptized is that they merit the victor’s crown in serious combat (cf. Tim. 1:18, 19;

6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3 ff.; 4:7, 8). Hence our Saviour not only bestows supernatural life on His own in baptism, but strengthens them for the combat through the sacrament of confirmation. He had told His apostles: “I will send the Paraclete to you; but stay in the city till you be endued with the power from on high” (cf. Lk. 24:49). The Holy Ghost, who on that first Pentecost descended upon the apostles, was indeed the source of their strength; He made them unconquerable in the confession of faith. This Holy Spirit the apostles imparted to the baptized by the imposition of hands and by prayer (cf. Acts 8:15 ff.), a practice that has remained in the Church even to the present day. The bishops, as successors of the apostles, lay their hands on the faithful and pray over them that they may receive the Holy Ghost and obtain strength to confess courageously and openly the faith that is in them; for the Holy Ghost is to remain with the Church forever to be the comforter and helper of all the faithful (cf. Jn. 14:16). In this sacrament it is the bishop who imposes hands and who pronounces the words; but He who sends the Holy Ghost, is Christ, who said: “I will send the Paraclete to you” (Jn. 16:7).

But soldiers who fight strenuously need nourishment. What does

our Saviour do? He gives us nourishment, and this nourishment is His body and blood. When the priest at Mass says: "This is My Body, this is My Blood," he is the representative of Christ who transforms the bread and wine into His Body and Blood, and invites us, saying: "Come and eat, this is the Bread of eternal life. Who eats of this Bread shall live forever" (cf. Jn. 6:48, 50). On His part Jesus is prepared to give us this Bread daily even to the last day of our life. United to Christ through baptism so as to constitute one Mystical Body with Him, strengthened for the combat by confirmation, nourished as often as we please with the Body and Blood of Christ, we journey through this life toward our heavenly home. Does our heavenly Friend allow us to want for anything?

The fact is, we should need nothing more if we would always be faithful to our Friend. But too often we reward these great blessings with base ingratitude. Far from loving our Saviour, we offend Him by our sins, separate ourselves from Him and join the ranks of His enemies. And what does our Saviour do? It seems as though He cannot forget the old friendship. Just like the father of the prodigal, He daily looks to see whether we shall find the way which leads back

to Him; and as soon as He sees us retracing our steps in sorrow, He leads us to the priest who tells us in His name: "I absolve you from your sins." These words, too, with their efficacious power, are the words of our Saviour. Thus His faithful friendship conquers our infidelity; and full of joy, He leads us once more to the Eucharistic banquet table and invites all the angels to rejoice with Him, because His child that was lost is found again, that was dead is risen again. Perhaps this joy will soon be extinguished by renewed sins. Nevertheless, while life endures, our merciful Lord is always ready to pardon the repentant sinner. Contrasted with the dark shadows of our infidelity, the fidelity of our Lord shines the more resplendent.

Faithful unto death. The decisive hour for the faithful and the faithless comes at last, the hour on which eternal happiness or eternal misery depends. It is then, above all, that our Saviour stands at our side. How many souls His love has snatched from the burning at that last dread moment! He comes to *us* a Viaticum for that last difficult journey to eternity. With Jesus in our hearts, we are to fight our last fight. And if perchance there are vestiges of sin still in our souls at that supreme moment, He

again sends His minister to anoint us with the oil of salvation and pronounce the words: “Through this holy unction and through His most tender mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed.” If our soul is free from all attachment to sin, the sacrament of extreme unction prepares us for immediate entrance into heaven. From the first effects of baptism until the final effects of the last sacraments, our Saviour is constantly at our side with His means of grace. Truly His is a heart faithful unto death.

2. *Our Saviour is faithful unto death also with His interior graces.* Is our Saviour at our side only with external graces? By no means. We forget all too frequently that He dwells in our souls as God where He works for us ceaselessly. St. Paul admonishes us: “Do not say in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ); or who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring up Christ from the dead)” (Rom. 10:6 ff.). For He dwells in your heart in virtue of a living faith.

Through sanctifying grace Christ makes it possible for our good works to bear fruit for eternal life. In themselves, no matter how excellent our good deeds are, they are valueless for eternal life if they do not receive their value from

sanctifying grace. What beauty is there in a diamond while it lies hid in the dark? It possesses none. But bring it into the light, and the radiance of its beauty sparkles from a thousand facets. Similarly, God has given us the natural faculty to perform morally good acts; but if they be not elevated by sanctifying grace, they are diamonds enveloped in darkness. Once, however, they are illumined by sanctifying grace, they attain a beauty which makes them objects fit to embellish the heavenly Jerusalem, and to fill the participants at the heavenly banquet with delight. This is “light in the Lord,” the conduct of the “children of the Light” (Eph. 5:8), the justice of Christ in us.³

Christ prompts us to perform good works by His actual graces so that, as Pope St. Celestine tells us, every holy thought, every pious resolution, every act of good will has its origin in Him without whom we can do nothing.⁴ If we would be as anxious to correspond with all the promptings of grace as our Saviour is in bestowing them, we should all soon be saints; for Christ exhorts our hearts and confirms us in every good work and deed (cf. 2 Thess. 2:16). Happy are we, if we hear and follow His suggestions.

3 Council of Trent, Sess. 6, C. 16.

4 Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 135.

Since the enemies of our salvation never break off their stubborn attacks, our Saviour never ceases to surround us with His grace as with a strong shield, which the fiery darts of the enemy cannot pierce. We shall thus contend unconquerably firm in the Lord and in His grace if we are faithful to our heavenly Friend (cf. Eph. 6:10 ff.). Christ fights with us and in us. He helps us in all the needs of this life and does not desert us in our greatest need at the hour of our death. Without His assistance we should fall a prey to our enemies. But confiding in Christ, let us say with the Apostle:

“O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? . . . But thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55, 57). Christ is “the Author of life” (Acts 3:15), Who has said of Himself: “I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in Me, even if he die, shall live” (Jn. 11:25). If the Author of life is with us, we need not fear death.

3. *Fidelity for fidelity.* What ought we to offer our Saviour in return for His fidelity but fidelity until death? “Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of life” (Apoc. 2:10). How often have we prayed: “May my baptismal promises remain inviolate forever!” Our baptism

was a contract with Christ. As the Apostle tells us, we do not say at baptism: “I am of Paul, or I am of “Apollo, or I am of Cephas.” “Has Christ been divided up? Was Paul then crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (i Cor. 1: 12, 13). All of us were baptized in the name of Christ, all of us vowed fidelity to Christ; and how often we have renewed our baptismal promises at Holy Communion! Jesus Christ is our redemption, His cross, our banner. We know no other name in which we may be saved save the name of Jesus. We know no other banner that can lead us to victory save the banner of Christ, the cross. The admonition of St. Paul to Timothy applies to us: “Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on the life eternal, to which thou hast been called.... Conduct thyself in work as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. . . . One who enters a contest, is not crowned unless he has competed according to the rules” (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3-5).

Today more than ever before, the enemies of Christ are audacious, they blaspheme Him, ridicule Him, and spare no pains to overthrow His kingdom. And shall we, who have been consecrated soldiers of Jesus Christ in confirmation, be less zealous, less courageous, and contend less perseveringly for the interests of our heavenly

King and Friend? Can it be of no consequence to us whether our Saviour is honored or despised? If that were true, it would be a sign that we are not friends of Jesus: for St. Thomas Aquinas tells us: “A friend considers the prosperity and adversity of his friend as his own, and hence he rejoices at the one and grieves at the other. . . . All his desires are for the welfare of his friend; and if the friendship is really intimate, he will spare no pains to ward off whatever might prove detrimental to his friend. When his friend is injured by word or deed, his zeal is at once aroused and he does all in his power to protect him.”⁵

We have no end of opportunity at present to prove the sincerity of our friendship for Christ. To oppose to the frenzy of unbelief a manly profession of faith, to equal if not to surpass the tireless activity of the enemies of Christ with zeal for all that may promote the glory and honor of Christ, never to permit that our devotion to our cause be surpassed by that of our opponents to theirs — these are proofs of faithful love for Jesus.

We nourish our souls so often with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ! May this banquet be for us what it was for St. John

Chrysostom, who wrote: “Let us return from this banquet lions breathing forth fire, made terrible to the enemies of Jesus Christ, our Leader constantly before us, and mindful of His faithful friendship.”⁶

But if we are unable to be other John Chrysostoms, we can at least cast ourselves at the feet of our divine Redeemer and tell Him how much it grieves us that His love is reviled by men; we can make reparation and offer Him all the satisfaction that the angels and saints in heaven and the just on earth render Him; we can ask Him to have mercy on sinful men and grant them the light to recognize their sins and contrition to amend their lives. Let us consider it one of the main purposes of our existence to spend ourselves in an effort to secure reparation for all the ingratitude with which the love of the Sacred Heart is returned. If we are really friends of Jesus, our love must prove itself by deeds, as His love has proved itself by bestowing incomparable benefits on us. O Jesus, we desire to be faithful to Thee until death; we wish to live, labor, suffer, and die for Thee; we swear fidelity to Thee for time and for eternity.

5 St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, I-2ae, q. 28, a. 1, 4.

6 St. John Chrysostom, In Joan. Hom. 46, n. 3

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