

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2021

The

“Instaurare omnia in Christo”

# ANGELUS

THE VOICE OF TRADITIONAL CATHOLICISM

## WOMEN AND THE CHURCH

Dr. Amy Fahey on the Visions of St. Bridget of Sweden

Dr. Andrew Childs on Hildegard von Bingen: *Féminine Mystique*

Mary's Not-So-Painless Labor: The Crucifixion as the Birth of the Church

Vatican II: Judging a Tree by Its Fruits

Archbishop Lefebvre's Sermon to the SSPX Sisters

An Interview With Fr. Emily, Chaplain of the SSPX Sisters' Novitiate

# LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear Reader,



**Fr. John Fullerton**  
District Superior of the  
United States of America

I am pleased to welcome you to the second issue of *The Angelus* following the new format inaugurated in the July/August edition.

The issue's theme invites you to explore the important role women have played in the Catholic Church from its divine establishment through the present day. Rather than present a "theory" of the proper role of women in the Church, we have opted to provide informative and edifying accounts of the myriad contributions that women have made to the *Corpus Mysticum* through the centuries. Examples include the mystical visions of St. Bridget of Sweden, the devout and intellectual life of St. Catherine of Siena, and the heroic witness of the ladies of Mexico. Of course, no series on women and the Church would be complete without exploring the nearly unfathomable role the greatest woman in history has played in the life of the Church, namely the Mother of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It is impossible to ignore, however, the manifold ways which the forces of liberalism, modernism, and relativism have distorted the appropriate role women have in both the Church and society. Pernicious ideologies such as feminism and gender theory have conspired to obscure the differences between the sexes in the natural and supernatural realms. This has led to cries from within the Church for such impossibilities as "women's ordination," the forerunner of which has been a steady expansion of the role of women in the Church's liturgy as altar servers, lectors, and even preachers. By focusing on the traditional role women have undertaken in the Church since time immemorial, I hope this issue presents a counterweight to contemporary errors.

In closing, I wish to also draw your attention to the "Faces New and Old" section immediately following this letter. I am proud that *The Angelus* will continue to feature its veteran contributors while also making way for the next generation of Catholic voices to continue the work of restoring Catholic Tradition.

Fr. John Fullerton  
Publisher

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“To publish Catholic journals and place them in the hands of honest men is not enough. It is necessary to spread them as far as possible that they may be read by all, and especially by those whom Christian charity demands we should tear away from the poisonous sources of evil literature.”  
–Pope St. Pius X

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# Faces New and Old

Introducing Our Regular Authors



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Fr. Bourmaud has spent the past 40 years at various posts including teaching at the SSPX seminaries in America, Argentina, and Australia; doing regular parish work; being in charge of the priests' training program; and editing/writing for Angelus Press. He is currently prior of St. Vincent's in Kansas City.



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Dr. John C. Rao obtained his doctorate in Modern European History from Oxford University in 1977. He worked in 1978-1979 as Eastern Director of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania and is now Associate Professor of European History at St. John's University in New York City, where he has taught since 1979. Dr. Rao is also director of the Roman Forum, a Catholic cultural organization. Perhaps the most important of his works are *Removing the Blindfold* (Remnant Press, 1999; 2nd revised edition, *The Angelus Press*, 2014)), and *Americanism and the Collapse of the Church in the United States* (Roman Forum Press, 1995). He is married and lives in Manhattan with his wife and three children.

**DR. ANDREW CHILDS, Music**

Dr. Andrew Childs has served as Associate Dean, Humanities Chair, and Professor of Music at St. Mary's College since 2008. Previously, he taught at Missouri State University, the Yale University School of Drama, the Thames Valley Music School at Connecticut College, and served as Managing Coordinator of the Department of Voice and Opera at the Yale School of Music. He earned his Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of California, Irvine, and his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Washington. Appearances as tenor soloist include those with Seattle Symphony, Seattle Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, the Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra, the American Symphony Orchestra, Harrisburg Opera, Seattle Symphony Chorale, Society of Composers International (SCI), Yale Camerata, Santa Barbara Quire of Voyces, Amato Opera, Springfield Symphony, Connecticut Master Chorale, Missouri Chamber Players, Orchestra Seattle, Springfield Opera, Musica Vocale, and Te Deum Antiqua. Dr. Childs has recorded for the Parma, Albany, Koch, and Centaur labels. He has been published by the Angelus Press and Catholic Family News, and lectures throughout the country on music and culture.



**PROF. DAVID CLAYTON, Art**

David Clayton is an internationally known artist, teacher, author, composer, and broadcaster. He moved to the US from his native England in 2009, to be Artist-in-Residence at Thomas More College of Liberal Arts in New Hampshire. A graduate of Oxford University, he is Provost and a founding faculty member of a new Catholic university ([www.Pontifex.University](http://www.Pontifex.University)). Clayton designed and implemented Pontifex's Master of Sacred Arts program, a formation for all creatives based upon that given to great artists of the past.

**MR. JONATHAN WANNER, Literature**

Jonathan Wanner is a doctoral candidate in English literature at the Catholic University of America; his chief academic interests include Shakespeare and the Metaphysical Poets, especially their ties to Renaissance prayer manuals, Catholic doctrine, and mysticism. In addition to teaching writing and Latin, he directs and composes sacred music at St. Luke's Ordinariate in Maryland. His work has appeared in the *St. Austin Review*, *Dappled Things*, *Ecumenica*, and *Every Day Fiction*.

**MR. MICHAEL WARREN DAVIS, Opinion**

Michael Warren Davis is the author, most recently, of *The Reactionary Mind* (Regnery, 2021). He previously served as editor-in-chief of *Crisis Magazine* and U.S. editor of the *Catholic Herald*. Read more at [www.northofboston.blog](http://www.northofboston.blog).

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Benjamin Bielinski is a Catholic writer with a background in marketing, sales and media. He previously lived abroad in Poland as a corporate, operations and logistics manager for IBM. He is currently the Director of Marketing and Sales at Angelus Press. Early in his career he spent a number of years at the Society of St. Pius X Seminary in Winona, MN and a year in the Benedictine Monastery of Silver City, NM.

**FR. JUAN CARLOS ISCARA, SSPX, Questions and Answers**

Fr. Iscara is Argentinian, born in 1951. He studied History in the "Instituto Superior del Profesorado" and the University of Buenos Aires, aiming at a specialization in ancient Roman history. He was ordained a priest at the seminary in La Reja by Archbishop Lefebvre in 1986. He served short stints at the priory in Wanganui (New Zealand) and at the seminary in Goulburn (Australia). Later he became the District Superior of Mexico. He has been teaching Church History and Moral Theology at St. Thomas Aquinas seminary since 1993. He has published quite a few articles in the *Angelus Magazine*, and speaks regularly at priests' meetings and the annual Angelus Press conferences.

**FR. CHRISTOPHER DANIEL, Liturgical Studies**

Fr. Christopher Daniel was ordained in 2000. After completing the philosophical and theological curriculum, he took up specialization in the study of sacred liturgy, and is stationed in Atlanta, Georgia.

**PAUPER PEREGRINUS, Apologetics**

Pauper Peregrinus is a priest ordained after the year 2000, with a degree in sacred theology.

**PATER INUTILIS, Scriptural Studies**



# *Mater Misericordia*

## *The Visions of St. Bridget of Sweden*

Dr. Amy Fahey

When I was a young, intellectually curious undergraduate, my rediscovery of the Faith coincided with a deep interest in literature and language, and particularly in the attempt to communicate religious experiences that are, essentially, ineffable. Looking to study the writings of the Middle Ages in graduate school, I found myself a semi-finalist for the Rhodes Scholarship. I had outlined a research project to study the use of language in the writings of female medieval mystics—women like St. Hildegard of Bingen and St. Catherine of Siena. Female medieval mysticism was a “hot topic” among scholars in those days, and my intention was to provide a corrective to the emerging and dominant radical feminist interpretations of the lives and writings of these women.

My interview took place around a conference table filled with former Rhodes Scholars in an office building in my home state of Michigan. Though predictably nervous, I thought the conversation was off to a good start, and then one man—a hard-headed auto executive who spoke slowly and with preci-

sion—leaned forward, raised his hand to his chin, and said, “I read somewhere that Catherine of Siena *levitated*. Do you think that’s really true?”

Thus ended my aspirations to be a Rhodes Scholar.

To the overly rational, scientific modern mind, the lives of the saints, especially those who experienced mystical visions, are not simply a little odd—they’re positively crazy. In the case of St. Birgitta of Sweden (1303-1373), also known as St. Bridget, or, in England, St. Bride, this is especially so. Devoted to meditating on the Passion of Christ since an initial vision at the age of 10, she received a particular vision informing her of the exact number of blows (5,480) Our Lord received during His Passion, along with instructions for daily prayers honoring each wound over the course of a year. When the Blessed Mother told her in a vision that she needed to learn Latin and difficulties presented themselves, St. Agnes came in visions to teach her. When the rule for her new order, The Order of the Most Holy Savior (later known simply as the Briggittines), was dictated to her *verbatim* by Our



**Cross that spoke to St. Bridget, St. Paul Outside the Walls, Rome.**



**Cutting from Burde der Welt, Cunradus Zeninger, 1481.**



**St. Bridget giving her rule to her order, 1480-1500, woodcut print on paper.**



**Anonymous, St. Bridget woodcut print, 1450-1500.**



Lord, she spent the next twenty years (1350–1370) doggedly petitioning the Pope to accept it (he eventually did). She was also granted numerous visions of souls in both Purgatory and Hell, depictions which rival in intensity and terror anything imagined by Dante.

It was Martin Luther who nicknamed St. Bridget *die tolle Brigit*—“that crazy Bridget”—and made light of her revelations and prophecies. He, along with Henry VIII, ushered in the disastrous era that saw the suppression or destruction of all the major Brigittine religious houses in England and Europe, including the thriving Syon Abbey in England, from which comes an early Middle English translation of the original Latin account of her visions: the *Liber Celestis*, or Heavenly Book. (Though poverty was embraced by the Brigittines, their joint religious houses were allowed an unlimited number of books, and St. Thomas More considered Syon Abbey to have the best library in all of Europe.) It is this Middle English version of St. Bridget’s visions, published in one volume by the Early English Text Society, through which I became introduced to the life and writings of this amazing saint.

Despite her unparalleled popularity and her influence on art, spirituality, and culture in the Middle Ages, many Catholics—even Catholic scholars—remain unfamiliar with her life and writings. If they know this widowed mother of eight at all, it is perhaps through her powerful meditations on the Passion. Yet for all their outrageousness—I would argue because of it—the life and writings of St. Bridget are intensely edifying and instructive, and her visions speak with particular urgency to our own fractured age.

St. Bridget lived in a time of widespread illness and contagion (only roughly 20% of the population of her home territory of Uppland survived the Black Plague), of pervasive immorality even among her own family members, of Church corruption at every



Syon Bridgettines, 1961.

level, of the collapse of law and order, even in major cities like Rome. Her chief task, as she experienced it through her revelations, was to elevate the moral tone of the age. “How stands the world now?” Christ asks his spiritual daughter at the outset of her visionary journey. The saint responds: “It stands as an open sack to whom all run, and as a man running who does not heed what will happen.” One would be hard-pressed to find a better description of the lives of many in our own day. In *Conversations with an Angel*, a vision which St. Bridget says was dictated to her by an angel, she describes the degradation of Rome:

Oh, my daughter, this city of Rome was in times past a city in which dwelt the warriors of Christ, its streets were strewn as if with gold and silver. But now all its precious sapphires are lying in the mire. . . . Toads and vipers build here.

St. Bridget was deeply concerned with the salvation of the least soul on earth—her early work in Sweden was for the care of unwed mothers and their infants, and her final vision articulates Christ’s rebuke to the slaveowners of Naples for not baptizing their “thralls” and instructing them in the Faith:

The maisters will nocht lerne thame ne informe thame in the cristen mannes bileue, ne how thai should have thame in resaiuinge

of the sacraments; and so thai can nocht have contricion and shrift as to be restorid to grace. (The masters will not teach or inform them in Christian men's beliefs, nor do they allow them to receive the sacraments, so they cannot have contricion and penance in order to be restored to grace).

Yet hers was essentially a “top down” approach to Church reform, and in many of her visions, Christ rebukes the temporal and spiritual leaders of the age for their poor example and grave injustices.

St. Bridget came from a long line of legal experts—her father, Birgir Persson, was “Law-speaker” for the Uppland district of Sweden—and her visions emphasize Our Lord's role as “domesman” or judge of mankind. Many of her visions take the form of a trial, with demons coming forward to condemn and “claim” the soul because of his iniquity on earth. But time and again, St. Bridget pres-

ents God's mercy, often at the last minute and through slender but sincere acts of contrition, charity, or penance on the part of the sinner, as a stay against damnation. In her visions, the essential role of Our Lady's intercession, as well as the prayers and petitions of the Saints in Heaven and pious folks on earth, is repeatedly emphasized. It is no exaggeration to suggest that the beautiful devotional image of Mary as the *mater misericordia*, or Mother of Mercy, is largely the result of St. Bridget's compelling visions.

In one revelation, a fiend accuses a soul: “O you rightful Judge, grant me this soul, and hear his works; for now his life is near the end. Allow me therefore to punish the body with the soul, until they are separated.” The fiend goes further, suggesting that if Our Lady “had sinned mortally and died without goodly contrition, you love justice so that her soul should never have got to Heaven, but it should have



**Medieval painting inspired by St. Bridget's vision of the Nativity when she was in Bethlehem. Her vision ushered in a new form of Nativity painting in the fifteenth century, the Adoration of the Infant. St. Bridget is seen in the lower right corner praying her beads.**

been with us in Hell. Therefore, Judge, why do you not condemn this soul to us, that we may punish it after his works.”

But with this impious speculation, the fiend has gone too far. At these words, a blaring sound of the trumpet is heard, and a voice cries out: “Be still and listen angels, souls, and fiends, to what the Mother of God speaks.” The Virgin then appears before the Throne of Judgment, “having under her mantle as it had been some great private things,” and chastises the demons: “O, you enemies, you persecute mercy and without charity you love justice.” She then says: “Yet see what I have under my mantle.” When she opens her mantle, on one side “appeared as like a little church, in which seemed to be some men of religion” and on the other “women, and men, friends of God . . . they all cried with one voice saying, ‘Have mercy, merciful Lord.’” The demons, before shrinking away, attempt to trivialize this intercession of religious, saints, and Our Lady: “‘We see,’ said they, ‘that in the world a little water and great air balance out the anger of God. And so by your prayer is God weighed to mercy with charity.’”

St. Bridget makes it clear that intercessory prayer is anything but “a little water and great air.” Of course, the soul, corrupted by sin, must cooperate with and desire the mercy offered by God and mediated by Our Lady and the saints. Christ’s bitter sacrifice on the Cross for the salvation of a sinful mankind reminds us that salvation is available to even the most vile of sinners. When St. Bridget, toward the close of her life, journeys on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Christ appears on the Throne of Majesty and tells her that He

loured mankind als mekill now as that time that he died on the crosse. For, if it were possibill, yete wald he dye for mannes saule. (He loved mankind as much now as when he died on the cross. If it were possible, he would die again for man’s soul.)

It is understandably difficult for Christians to be reminded that God’s grace and mercy are extended even to those who are the most notorious public sinners of our age, be they celebrities, politicians, or prelates. In one of her most extended visions, “The Father

of Heaven showed to Saint Birgitta a severe judgment upon a king who was unkind and disobedient to the counsels of God.” In this vision, souls in Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory come forward to ask wrath upon the king and all temporal rulers who mislead multitudes and cause widespread suffering. Then follows Abraham and the Patriarchs, the Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, all of whom cry judgment upon the rulers who have disobeyed God and His precepts. After this extended vision, which runs to several pages and presents overwhelming evidence of the condemnation of these earthly rulers, there occurs a brief exchange which, in understated yet powerful language, alters everything:

After all this, the Virgin who sat by the Lamb said: “O most sweet Lord, have mercy upon them.”

To her the Judge answered, “It is not right,” he said, “to deny you any thing. Therefore they who cease from sin and do worthy penance shall find mercy; and judgment shall be turned away from them.”

Over 3,000 words of condemnation are rebutted in these eight simple words of Our Lady.

Saint Bridget was canonized in 1391, just eighteen years after her death. When Dame Margery Kempe visited St. Bridget’s former apartment in Rome not long after the canonization, she spoke there with Catherine of Flanders, who had been a longtime serving maid of St. Bridget and still occupied her mistress’ former home. Catherine described to Dame Margery the saint’s perpetually joyful countenance: “sche was goodly and meke to euery creatur and that sche had a lawhyng cher” (she was gentle and kind to every creature and she had a ‘laughing cheer,’ or cheerful face). To maintain such cheer in the midst of constant trials and widespread corruption is the task of every aspiring saint, and indeed every Christian. As St. Bridget’s writings remind us, it is a task made all the lighter by the contemplation of the intercessory mantle of Our Lady and the boundless mercy of Our Lord.

Self-portrait by St. Hildegard.



# Hildegard von Bingen:

## *Féminine Mystique*

Dr. Andrew Childs, D.M.A.

**H**oly Mother Church: the name our Faith gives the Church serves as the point of departure in considering the current theme of women and the Church. Enemies of the Bride of Christ have always accused Her of misogyny, abuse, intimidation, and oppression, and never more gleefully than in the cultural *climate du jour*, hell-bent on havocking all things Holy and natural. Far from suppressing or undervaluing women, however, the Church not only submits to the absolute queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary but defines Herself by two sublime feminine attributes—holiness and maternity.

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179), the “Sybil of the Rhine,” was a visionary, author, composer, artist, naturalist, healer, abbess, correspondent and counselor to political and religious leaders, preacher, Saint, and Doctor of the Church. She was not a feminist.<sup>1</sup> Since the early 20th century, Hildegard has become the unlikely darling of a variety of progressive causes. For the New Age theologians, her visions—both the often-obscure allegorical written descriptions and mildly

psychedelic Medieval visual depictions—have a cosmic appeal. Secular medical historians apply a retrospective diagnosis of migraine suffering to explain the nature of these images, dismissing the possibility of Divine inspiration. Adherents of homeopathy and naturopathy posit that her writings on herbal cures and disease qualify her as a pioneer in natural healing and suggest a “Green” sensibility. For social revolutionaries, her position of authority as advisor and religious leader—and her perceived history of feisty opposition to the patriarchy—secure her standing as a proto-feminist. Worse yet, but certainly predictably, this last bunch speculate about her sexuality, given her intimate friendships with her *consoeurs*. The Saints do not suffer in Heaven after death, but their reputations can certainly take a beating here below.

The brief portrait that follows will likely not convince Hildegard’s secular admirers that her life and work inherently and magnificently oppose their progressive ideology. I do hope, however, that for Catholic readers unfamiliar with the real Hildegard, they might sympathize with the attempt to separate her

from the naturalists' usurpation of her life and work and will find in her a genuine source of artistic wonder and spiritual inspiration.

### Hildegard the feminine

Early biographers identify Hildegard's parents as Hildebert and Mechtilda and classify them as belonging to the noble class, though record no family name. Hildebert served as a soldier under Meginhard, Count of Spanheim in Rhenish Franconia. Born the last of 10 children in 1098, every reference to Hildegard as a child describes her as "weak and sickly." Due in large part to this frailty, she received little formal education as a child, and her parents promised her to God, assigning her at the age of eight to the service of the anchoress Jutta of Spanheim, sister of Count Meginhard. Jutta had rejected all offers of marriage and lived as a recluse in a cell constructed by her father attached to the Benedictine monastery of Disibodenberg. As an anchoress, she took a vow never to leave her cell, but she assisted the monks through prayer and domestic tasks. She could converse with visitors, and developed a following large enough to require the construction of additional cells adjoining the monastery. She would take certain of these followers to live in her cell as assistants, the case with Hildegard. Hildegard learned to read Latin and to chant the Psalter, though no sure proof exists that she ever learned to write. In 1113 she took the veil, and when Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard became the superior of the small community.<sup>2</sup>

Against the wishes of the abbot, Hildegard left the monastery at Disibodenberg and

founded a monastery near Bingen in Rupertsberg. Built between 1147 and 1150, Hildegard oversaw construction, and the more zealous of her admirers claim she acted as architect. She founded a sister house in Eibingen in 1165, and by 1163, letters of protection written for her by Frederick Barbarossa refer to her as abbess.<sup>3</sup>

### Hildegard the mystical

In 1912, British physician Charles Singer moved to Wiesbaden. Married to a medievalist, Singer had developed a keen interest in history, and through academic connections, gained access to the manuscript of Hildegard's *Scivias*, the three-volume set of twenty-six prophetic visions with illumination written between 1141-1150. Intrigued by what he saw in the illustrations, he "recognized at once that the figures...resembled descriptions by patients of what they had seen during attacks of migraine."<sup>4</sup> Seven hundred-fifty years after her death, Singer pronounced a retrospective diagnosis de-mystifying the mystic. Historian Katherine Foxhall keenly and succinctly finds motive, writing,

Using his medical knowledge to render the unusual patterns in Hildegard's religious imagery as the manifestation of a neurological disorder was important because it enabled Singer to sideline Hildegard's theology and replace it with "science" as the basis for her philosophy of the world.<sup>5</sup>

From an early age, Hildegard had visionary episodes, which often came on in spectacular fashion, accompanied by blinding light, and rendered her motionless. She would



Christ by St. Hildegard.

initially describe these occurrences to Jutta and others as a simple matter of fact, but as people became more uneasy with the often highly involved and disturbingly detailed nature of her visions, she became more reluctant to share them. “Up to my fifteenth year,” she wrote, “I saw much, and related some of the things seen to others, who would inquire with astonishment, whence such things might come. I also wondered and during my sickness I asked one of my nurses whether she also saw similar things. When she answered no, a great fear befell me. Frequently, in my conversations, I would relate future things, which I saw as if present, but noticing the amazement of my listeners, I become more reticent.”<sup>6</sup> She had always considered the illness accompanying her visions as God’s dis-

pleasure, but in one particularly intense episode she experienced at the age of forty, she heard the voice of God commanding her to write and put down what she heard and saw. With the approval of the Archbishop of Mainz, the encouragement of St. Bernard, and ultimately a directive from Pope Eugene III, she set about the ten years’ work of the *Scivias*. Visions include “God, the Light-Giver and Humanity,” “The Fall,” “The Choirs of Angels,” “The Trine God,” “The Sacrifice of Christ and the Church,” “The Zeal of God,” and “The End of Time.” The text is “an extraordinary production and hard to understand, prophetic throughout and admonitory after the manner of Ezechiel and the Apocalypse.”<sup>7</sup> Hildegard filled the paintings, though brilliant and bold, with easily recognizable Christian imagery. One reads and sees in

the *Scivias* coherent orthodoxy rather than a migraineur’s hallucination.

### Hildegard the artistic

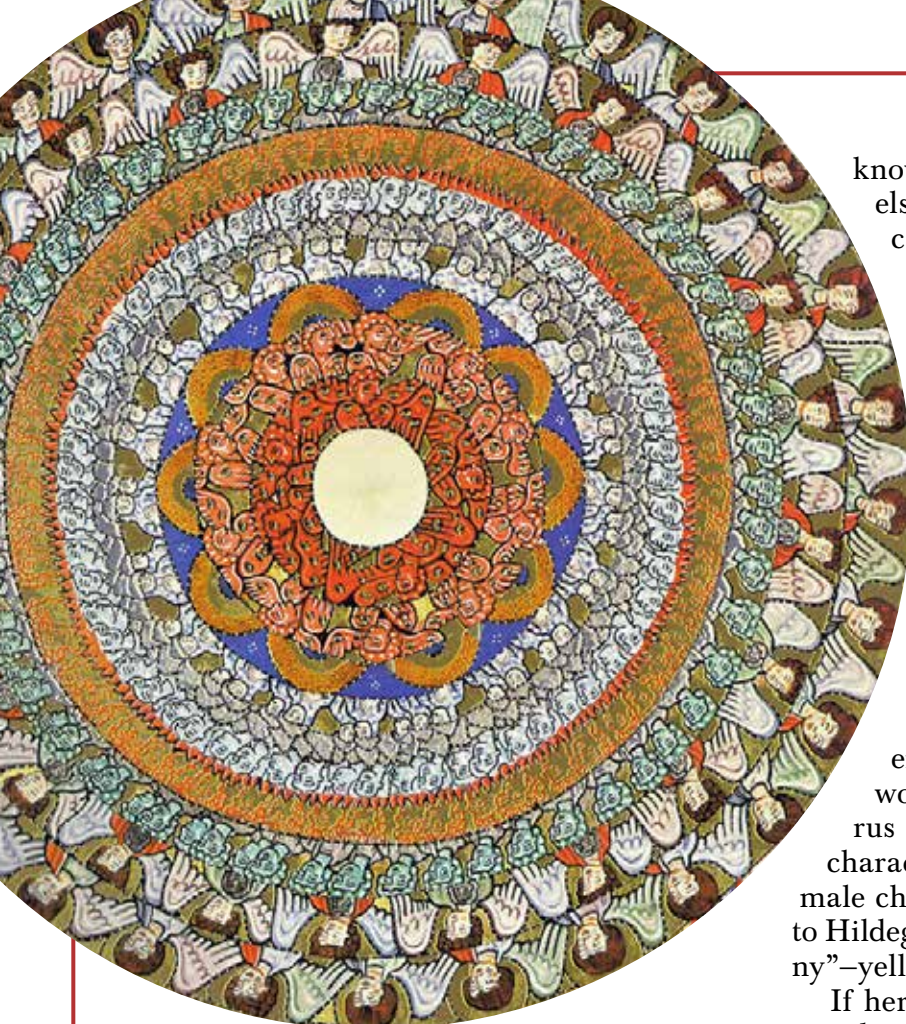
In Canto XI of the *Inferno*, Dante states “Art is the grandchild of God.”<sup>8</sup> Attribution to Hildegard of her writings, artistic images, and music provokes no controversy, yet many scholars agree that other individuals did the physical work of making the art—painting pictures, writing texts, notating music. Though not uncommon in medieval times (when artists assumed anonymity), this also represents a beautiful metaphoric reminder of the relationship between artistic inspiration and expression: as God guides the hand of the artist, Hildegard directed specifically talented artists to bring her impulses to life.

Hildegard’s collected output in literature (prose, poetry, and technical writings), painting, correspondence, and music remains one of the most impressive and important bodies of work by an individual in the medieval era. Beyond the *Scivias*, writings on spirituality and theology include *Liber Vitae Meritum* (*Book of Life’s Merits*, 1158-1163), and the *Liber Divinorum Operum* (*Book of Divine Works*, 1163-1172). Writings on science and medicine include *Physica* which describes characteristics and



Cosmos by St. Hildegard.

properties of animals, plants, and minerals; and *Causae et Curae* which exhaustively (in 530 chapters) considers the human being, physically and functionally, in health and sickness, in the context of the created order. The latest scholarship numbers her letters—to Popes (4 of them), Kings (2), Archbishops (10), Bishops (9), Abbots (49), Abbesses (23), Priests, Religious,



**Vision of the Angelic Hierarchy by St. Hildegard.**

and lay people (including excommunicants)—at 353. She wrote fifty homilies and developed her own language, the “Lingua Ignota,” complete with its own alphabet.

Her visual style exhibits standard medieval characteristics—iconographic Christian symbolism, bright colors, bold shapes and figures—but remains remarkable for its allegorical concision, frequently capturing in single panels the essence of highly complicated theological constructs and relationships. Whether disturbing—*Vision of the Last Days*—or hauntingly lovely—*The Universe*, *The true Trinity in true Unity*—the images at once occupy a place in and out of stylistic time.

For Hildegard, poetry and music unite. Of her poetic style Barbara Newman writes, “Hildegard’s poetic world is like the Sybil’s cave; difficult to access, reverberating with cryptic echoes. The oracle’s message, once interpreted, may or may not hold surprises... No formal poetry written in the twelfth century, and none that Hildegard might have

known, is very much like hers. For models one must look, rather, to the rich corpus of liturgical prayer.”<sup>9</sup> Just as her pictures illuminated her visions, her music gives soul to her poetic lyrics. Her output includes some seventy compositions—hymns, sequences, and antiphons, all on religious themes—and the *Ordo Virtutum* (*The Order of the Virtues*, 1151), a morality play set to music that could qualify as the first fully-conceived opera, nearly five centuries before Monteverdi. In the *Ordo*, Hildegard presents the dramatic struggle between the Virtues and the Devil for a soul. Seventeen individual virtues, the soul, a women’s chorus of souls, a men’s chorus of Prophets and Patriarchs, and the character of Hildegard sing the score; the male character of the Devil—who according to Hildegard, “cannot produce divine harmony”—yells or grunts.

If her art outpaces stylistic characterization, her music flies away. The overwhelming majority of medieval music remains locked in time and stylistic space, often severe and angular. Hildegard’s music, constructed almost entirely of motivic melodic formulae, employs a stunningly wide melodic range, and implies mysterious harmonies, timeless and hypnotically beautiful. From the majestic and mysterious *O vis aeternitatis* to the rhapsodic *O spendissima Gemma* and the playfully joyous *O viridissima Virga*, the music and words not only support each other, but seem to frolic together. In her music, Hildegard expresses mystical orthodoxy with astonishing freshness.

### **Hildegard the Saint**

The *cultus* of Hildegard developed before her death, and firmly established itself immediately after. Six months before she died, however, she and her community languished under interdict. The bishop of Mainz had demanded the exhumation of the body of a previously excommunicated young nobleman from the cemetery adjacent her convent. Arguing that the man had received last rites



before burial, thus proving his reconciliation with the Church, Hildegard refused. The bishop pronounced the sentence, with the specific indication forbidding the singing of the Office: deprived of their voices—barred from producing “divine harmony”—they could only whisper. Hildegard and her community submitted to the punishment, but she began an intense series of correspondence, and the bishop lifted the sentence in March of 1179. Hildegard died on September 17, 1179.

Gregory IX (r. 1227-41) opened her cause for canonization, which Innocent IV (r. 1243-54) continued, and Clement V (1305-14) and John XXII (1316-34) repeated. Listed in the Martyrology, and having remained on regional liturgical calendars for centuries, Benedict XVI declared her a Saint on May 10, 2012, and on October 7, 2012, a Doctor of the Church. The Church places her Feast on September 17, the anniversary of her death.

“She would have been extraordinary,” writes Barbara Newman, “in any age. But for a woman of the 12th century, hedged by the constraints of a misogynist world, her achievements baffle thought, marking her as a figure so exceptional that posterity has found it hard to take her measure.”<sup>10</sup> The things of eternity defy measure. Her secular admirers, hedged by the constraints of a worldview willfully ignorant of supernatural reality, see Hildegard as an extraordinary woman who created an artistic ethos in defiance of the order imposed on her by men. We, who believe as she believed, venerate her as a Saint

inspired and liberated by God, whose vision and expression of supernatural beauty open on to the divine.

St. Hildegard, Feather on the Breath of God, *ora pro nobis*.

### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> And I do not refer lightly to the canonical feminist work noted in the second half of this article’s title [Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963)], which shows a clear distaste for both the feminine and the mystical.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Appleton, 1910); Volume 7, 351-353.
- <sup>3</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1995); Volume 8, 553-556.
- <sup>4</sup> Charles Singer, *From Magic to Science* (New York: Dover, 1958); viii.
- <sup>5</sup> Katherin Foxhall, “Making Modern Migraine Medieval: Men of Science, Hildegard of Bingen and the Life of a Retrospective Diagnosis,” *Cambridge Journal of Medical History* (58/3, July 2014); 354-372.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Appleton, 1910); Volume 7, 351-353
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>8</sup> Dante Alighieri, Mark Musa, editor and translator, *The Portable Dante* (New York: Penguin, 2003); 60.
- <sup>9</sup> Barbara Newman, *Vision: the Life and Music of Hildegard von Bingen* (New York: Penguin, 1995); 69.
- <sup>10</sup> Barbara Newman, *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard von Bingen and her World* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1998); 1.



# Mary's Not-So-Painless Labor

## The Crucifixion as the Birth of the Church

Jonathan Wanner

Most devout Catholics would be hard-pressed to think of a Marian poem outside of the familiar chants, carols, and hymns that rightfully hold a sacrosanct place in the liturgy. Where would one even begin such a search? Certainly, the corpus of Richard Crashaw would be one of the last hiding-spots one might explore. As a lesser-known Baroque poet, his England had little of the Marian enchantment that brands so many Late Medieval poems and miracle legends. He lived, after all, in the wake of Elizabeth I—a Queen who redirected Marian devotion to herself, appropriating such Marian symbols as the rose, the moon, the star, the phoenix, and the pearl.<sup>1</sup> Yet, just as the greatest heroes are bred from the most terrible wars, so too the finest Marian poems might find fertile ground in soil that is otherwise hostile toward Our Lady.

There is a reason why Crashaw's "Lady lyrics" are a garden well worth forking: with skull-cracking wit, he cross-pollinates Marian dogmas, the devotion to Her Seven Sorrows, and Patristic teachings. Most of the poems are epigrams—brief word-puzzles that use riddling language such as metaphors and irony to turn common observations into rare and memorable insights. Crashaw is especially

interested in the electrifying reversals that one may encounter when reading the Church Fathers: Mary is a virgin, a "fountain seal'd," even while a mother<sup>2</sup>; Eve's disobedience slew man, yet Mary "the maiden Eve's" obedience saved him<sup>3</sup>; Mary is God's "faithful daughter," yet Christ's "mother."<sup>4</sup> One reversal, however, stands out for its rarity: the notion that Mary's birthing pangs occurred not at Christ's nativity, but at the nativity of the Church. It is the central theme of his Latin epigram "On the Easy Birth of the Blessed Virgin" [*In partum B. Virg. Non difficilem*]:<sup>5</sup>

*Nec facta est tamen illa Prens impune; quod  
almi*

*Tam parcens uteri venerit ille Puer.*

*Una haec nascentis quodcunque pepercerit  
hora,*

*Toto illum vitae tempore parturijt*

*Gaudia parturientis erat semel ille parenti;  
Quotidie gemitus parturientis erat*

Nor was she made a mother without punishment; Even though that Boy Came from her nurturing womb very much sparing her [pain].

Whatever (agony) that single hour of  
birth had spared,  
She was in labor with him her whole life  
long.

Once he was the joys of his mother's  
laboring;  
Then daily he was the groans of her  
laboring.

The poem's first stanza alludes to the time-honored tradition that Mary experienced childbirth "without punishment," *i.e.* without pain. Theologians usually derive this conclusion from Mary's Immaculate Conception: because Mary was preserved from the stain of original sin, she would have been spared the birthing pangs that punished Eve for her first disobedience (Gen. 3:16). A similar argument excuses Mary's birth pangs on account of her perpetual virginity. Any mother would have maternal badges of suffering, such as stretch marks and varicose veins; Mary's virginal body, however, remained miraculously intact throughout the entire process of Jesus' birth.<sup>6</sup> In the words of Crashaw, "The door was shut, yet let in day, / The fountain seald, yet life found way."<sup>7</sup> If her body exhibited no signs of birthing pains, surely it is because the Nativity was solely a pleasure.

To skeptics, the notion of a painless Nativity seems to defy the Blessed Virgin's humanity. Surely Our Lady cannot be an authentic mother if she did not endure every mother's "rite of passage." Women simply cannot relate—not to a Mary who, like a fairy, appears human but is a goddess in disguise—a goddess who needs no Tylenol, no epidural because God gave her a "Get Out of Pain Free" card. Yet, Crashaw never insists that Mary lived altogether free from pain. As the second and third stanzas suggest, the "single hour" of a joyful nativity would soon become a "whole life" of "groans"<sup>8</sup>; Mary would endure a martyrdom, not in a moment, but throughout her life. One need only glance over her Seven Sorrows to recollect a few of the "groaning" moments that Crashaw is alluding to here:

1. The prophecy of Simeon (*Luke 2:25-35*)
2. The flight into Egypt (*Matthew 2:13-15*)
3. Loss of the Child Jesus for three days (*Luke 2:41-50*)

4. Mary meets Jesus on His way to Calvary (*Luke 23:27-31; John 19:17*)
5. Crucifixion and Death of Jesus (*John 19:25-30*)
6. The body of Jesus being taken from the Cross (*Luke 23:50-54; John 19:31-37*)
7. The burial of Jesus (*Isaiah 53:8; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42; Mark 15:40-47*)

For Crashaw, the one-time joy of Christ's birth gives way to "daily" labor pains—not because Mary's womb would suffer daily contractions, but because she must routinely grieve during Christ's infancy, boyhood, and manhood. In this respect, she "was in labor with him her whole life long."

With ironic wit, the final stanza surprises us with the realization that Mary's labor pangs are actually the pains Christ suffered on behalf of the Church: "Once he was the joys of his mother's laboring; / Then daily he was the groans of her laboring."<sup>9</sup> Here Christ "was the groans" of Mary's labor because His Crucifixion figuratively begot the Church. Christ himself alludes to his Passion in terms of childbirth in John 16:21. Just as a woman "in labor hath sorrow" then afterward rejoices "that a man is born," so too Christ endured agony to bring forth the Church.<sup>10</sup> To some, the image of Christ "birthing" the Church seems odd, even improper: Christ, after all, is neither a woman nor pregnant, and the Church is not literally a rosy-skinned newborn. Crashaw, however, is not asking us to fixate on Christ's body as if it were feminine. The poem, rather, focuses on two similarities that childbirth and the Crucifixion share—sorrow and new life.

The significance of these two similarities comes to light when we consider the Patristic tradition that Christ birthed the Church from his pierced side. As St. John Chrysostom explains, the water and blood that issued from Christ's spear-wound, symbolizing Baptism and the Eucharist respectively, poured out for humanity the fundamental sacraments that "give rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit," so that "From these two sacraments the Church is born."<sup>11</sup> The word "born," in this case, is especially fitting because Eve's birth from Adam's side is a typological reference to the Church's birth from Christ's side:



Above, God delivers Eve from Adam's side. Below, He delivers *Ecclesia* from Christ's side.

Bible moralisée: The Creation of Eve and The Birth of *Ecclesia*, fol. 2v (detail), ONB Han. Cod. 2554, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. Made in Paris, 1225–49.

“As God then took a rib from Adam’s side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and water after his own death.”<sup>12</sup> Returning to Crashaw’s epigram, we find the notion of *Ecclesia*’s birth enriches and clarifies the final stanza. Christ, as Crashaw says, “was the groans of her [Mary’s] labor,” because Christ figuratively suffered the labor pangs Mary was spared when He birthed the Church.<sup>13</sup>

Just as Mary’s labor pangs were Christ’s, so too Christ’s labor pangs were Mary’s. Mary may not have been the primary “birther” of the Church—her blood and water did not spill from Christ’s side—but she endured Christ’s travail by imitating His pain as perfectly as a human may. As St. Lawrence Justinian says, “The heart of the Virgin was made the brightest mirror of Christ’s Passion ... The Son was crucified in body, the Mother in mind.”<sup>14</sup> Crashaw’s epigram, due to its brevity, does not elaborate upon how Mary is a mirror of the Passion, but we can imagine what Crashaw means by considering his poetic paraphrase of the *Stabat Mater*: “*Sancta Maria Dolorum*.” Mary is so much Christ’s likeness, that “Each wound of His” is “All, more at home in her owne heart.”<sup>15</sup> Mary and Christ “Discourse alternate wounds to another,” so that whatever injury Christ endures, Mary experiences in a different form.<sup>16</sup> When Christ’s body “weeps BLOOD,” Mary’s eyes “bleed TEARS.”<sup>17</sup> Christ’s nails “write swords” in Mary’s heart, and these in turn “growing with his pain, / Turn SPEARES” and return to Christ again.<sup>18</sup> This union—that Mary becomes an Image of her Son crucified—is the ultimate irony of Crashaw’s epigram, since it means that the pain she was spared at Christ’s birth was figuratively realized at His death, the Church’s Nativity. In the words of St. John Damascene, “The Virgin suffered at the Passion the pangs she escaped in child-birth.”<sup>19</sup>

By “laboring” with Christ at his Crucifixion, Mary reversed Eve’s punishment (Gen. 3:16), making of it a happy fault. As much as the Old Eve slew all, Mary the “New Eve” conceived our sacramental life, not only birth-

ing Christ, but mirroring his pierced side in her heart. Looking to her, mothers can find empathy in the painful nativity of the Church, even if they struggle to relate to the painless nativity of Christ. By the singular gift of labor pangs, women may become, like Mary, a looking glass of Christ's wounds. Like Mary's, a mother's martyrdom is rarely in one moment, but throughout a life, as the "birthing pains" continue through her newborn's infancy, childhood, and adulthood. By her child, her sanctity is reared. By her body's laboring, her soul may find itself a child at Christ's sacramental side, where if she will not bleed with Him, she at least may weep with His mother.

### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> McClure, Peter, and Robin Headlam Wells, "Elizabeth I as a Second Virgin Mary," *Renaissance Studies* 4, no. 1 (1990): 39.
- <sup>2</sup> Richard Crashaw, "O Gloriosa Domina," *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), line 36.
- <sup>3</sup> Crashaw, "O Gloriosa Domina," line 26.
- <sup>4</sup> Crashaw, "Luke 1:38, To the Blessed Virgin, Believing," line 4.
- <sup>5</sup> Note: The English translation is my own. Richard Crashaw, "In partum B. Virg. Non difficilem," *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 265.
- <sup>6</sup> CCC 499, citing *Lumen Gentium*, 57.
- <sup>7</sup> Richard Crashaw, "O Gloriosa Domina," *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), lines 35-36.
- <sup>8</sup> Richard Crashaw, "In partum B. Virg. Non difficilem," *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), lines 4, 6.
- <sup>9</sup> Richard Crashaw, "In partum B. Virg. Non difficilem," *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), lines 5-6.
- <sup>10</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible
- <sup>11</sup> From the "Catecheses" by St. John Chrysostom, bishop (Cat. 3, 13-19; SC 50, 174-177).
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Richard Crashaw, "In partum B. Virg. Non difficilem," *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), line 6.
- <sup>14</sup> Cornelius à Lapide, "The Great Commentary of Cornelius À Lapide: S. Matthew's Gospel—Chaps. 22 to 28 and S. Mark's Gospel—Complete," trans. Thomas W. Mossman, Third Edition, vol. 3 (London: John Hodges, 1891), 249-325.
- <sup>15</sup> Richard Crashaw, "Sancta Maria Dolorum," *The Complete Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), lines 9-10.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Line 24.



**Scivias Codex, Virgin Birth**

- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Lines 19-20.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Line 27, 29-30.
- <sup>19</sup> Cornelius à Lapide, "The Great Commentary of Cornelius À Lapide: S. Matthew's Gospel—Chaps. 22 to 28 and S. Mark's Gospel—Complete," trans. Thomas W. Mossman, Third Edition, vol. 3 (London: John Hodges, 1891), 249-325.



“When I was forty-two years and seven months old, Heaven was opened and a fiery light of exceeding brilliance came and permeated my whole brain, and inflamed my whole heart and my whole breast, not like a burning but like a warming flame, as the sun warms anything its rays touch. And immediately I knew the meaning of the exposition of scriptures, namely the Psalter, the Gospel and the other Catholic volumes of both the Old and New Testaments, though I did not have the interpretation of the words of their texts or the division of the syllables or the knowledge of cases or tenses. But I had sensed in myself wonderfully the power and mystery of secret and admirable visions from my childhood—that is, from the age of five—up to that time as I do now.”—St. Hildegard, *Scivias*

*Christ Glorified in the Court of Paradise*, 1423-24, Fra Angelico.







# A Lover for All Seasons

## The Song of Songs and the Madonna of the Quail

Prof. David Clayton

**H**ow do you paint the love of God? Love is not something we will ever see directly, and this creates difficulties for artists who work in a purely visual medium. The answer for many who wish to represent the greatest virtue has been to seek inspiration in the allegorical account of God's love in the Song of Songs, and in Mary, the great lover and most beloved Mother of God.

*Fair in every part, my true love, no fault in all thy fashioning!*

*Venture forth from Lebanon, and come to me, my bride, my queen that shall be! Leave Amana behind thee, Sanir and Hermon heights, where the lairs of lions are, where the leopards roam the hills.*

*What a wound thou hast made, my bride, my true love, what a wound thou hast made in this heart of mine! And all with one glance of an eye, all with one ringlet straying on thy neck!*

*Sweet, sweet are thy caresses, my bride, my true love; wine cannot ravish the senses like that*

*embrace, nor any spices match the perfume that breathes from thee.*

*Sweet are thy lips, my bride, as honey dripping from its comb; honey-sweet thy tongue, and soft as milk; the perfume of thy garments is very incense.*

*My bride, my true love, a garden enclosed; hedged all about, a fountain shut in and sealed! What wealth of grace is here!*

*Well-ordered rows of pomegranates, tree of cypress and tuft of nard; no lack there whether of spikenard or saffron, of calamus, cinnamon, or incense-tree, of myrrh, aloes or any rarest perfume.*

*A stream bordered with garden; water so fresh never came tumbling down from Lebanon.*

*North wind, awake; wind of the south, awake and come; blow through this garden of mine, and set its fragrance all astir. (Song of Songs 4:7-16)*

By tradition, the eight chapters of the *Song of Songs* describe the love of Solomon and one of his wives for each other in lyrical-dramatic scenes and reciprocal songs, each addressing the other in turn.

Commentators have seen the account of romantic love between Solomon and his beloved as an allegory that reveals some of the mystery of the nature of God's love, as multifaceted and superabundant. It has been interpreted, for example, as a symbol of the love of God for his chosen people, Israel; of Christ for his Church; of Christ for each of us, as members of the Church; of God for all humanity; of the Father for the Son; and of the Father for the Mother of God. It is the last example that we consider today.

The variety of loves that it represents tell us of the multi-faceted nature of God's love. We might say that God's love is a simple single utterance that is, paradoxically, infinitely faceted and deep. Human love, therefore, for all the intense passion we read in this book, is but a pale imitation of a tiny part of the greater love that it points to.

The interchange of love in the *Song of Songs* takes place in a secluded and beautiful garden. But at times the imagery blurs the distinction between the protagonists and their setting, so that the people are likened to the beautiful and fruitful plants and animals within the garden. Most powerfully, as in the passage quoted above, the beloved becomes the garden itself. This emphasizes that the beauty of all creation, and the fruitfulness and fertility that we see in it, are all perceptible signs of God's immense love.

It is interesting to note also that in the course of the *Song of Songs*' eight chapters, the voice of the lover switches. The book is written as a first-person narrative, in which the lover describes the beloved to the reader or addresses the beloved directly. This style never changes. But what does change periodically, without warning or explanation, is the subject who is speaking. At one moment, the narrator addressing us is the bridegroom speaking to and of his bride; the next the narrator is the bride addressing the bridegroom. This flipping of the subject occurs several times, and is a key to understanding an aspect of the Christian ideal of love that is exactly contrary to the caricature that is portrayed by ardent critics of Christianity today.

Christian or not, few I suggest would argue with the idea that when true love

exists between two people, both are lover and beloved in the relationship, interacting in a dynamic exchange of love. The regular change of narrator communicates to us that natural kind of loving interaction.

The steady and rich flow of love between them is a constant element. It is as though this canticle is not so much about the lovers as it is about love.

One traditional pictorial representation of God's love as described in the *Song of Songs*, focuses on the interpretation of the *Song of Songs* as an allegory of the Father's love for Mary, the Mother of God. In Latin this genre of paintings is called *Hortus conclusus*—garden enclosed—and *Fons signatus*—sealed fountain, taking inspiration from from verse 4:12: "She is a garden enclosed, my sister, my promised bride; a garden enclosed, a sealed fountain."

This image of the Mother and her Son, the two greatest lovers, was painted in Italy in the 15th century in the late Gothic style by the artist Pisanello. The art of this period is also known as *quattrocento*, from the Italian for the 1400s. The artist was known for his studies of birds and nature and he has included many in this painting. He represents the rose garden in great detail and it is known as the Virgin of the Quail, for the large bird painted bottom right.

This is as much a painting of Mary as the garden, as it is of her in the garden. I love the graceful flow of the lines in the drapery and the gentle touch of the hands on her Son, emphasized by the artist in enlarging the hands beyond natural proportions as they draw the Son and Mother into a an embrace.

The balanced, simple, and harmonious flow of the broad design is embellished with gorgeous detail in the portrayal of the flora and fauna (which extends into the design of the embossing in the gold in the upper part of the painting). Gold is used to suggest the heavenly dimension and we see two angels crown her as Queen of heaven.

The Mother of God is likened by the Church Fathers to a garden because of her fertility as a perfect mother, and the source of the cultivation of the new Tree of Life, which was originally in the Garden of Eden and described in the book of Genesis. The

Fall, which took place in Eden, resulted from Adam and Eve succumbing to temptation and eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. St. Ephraim the Syrian, a Christian commentator from the fourth century who was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1920 by Pope Benedict XV, believed that Adam and Eve were subsequently expelled from Eden to prevent them from eating of the Tree of Life. Had they eaten the fruit of the Tree of Life, he says, it would have resulted in their living forever in the misery of their fallen state. With Christ's establishment of his Church, Christians in communion with the Church are now able to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life, the fruit of which is Christ himself present in the Eucharist. By this, we are permitted to live forever, partaking of the divine nature.

Mary is not only the garden, she is also the *fons conclusus*, a fountain of life sealed by her perpetual virginity. The image of living, that is, flowing, water is often connected to the Spirit that brings life out the dry ground of our hearts and leads us to eternal life. So the Virgin is a garden, watered by the living water of the Holy Spirit, from which springs the Tree of Life, Christ.

The garden is enclosed and the fountain sealed because she remains perpetually a virgin.

The Mother both the lover and the beloved of the Father. As such she is most beloved and the great lover of God, both active and passive. She is the greatest lover in the human race, aside from Christ himself.

We should all look to Mary, therefore, in the hope of perfecting the pattern of our love of others.



Page from a German blockbook, *Canticum Cantorum* (ca. 1469).

# What a Woman Must Do

## The Feminine Mystique Versus the Brigades of St. Joan of Arc

John Rao, D. Phil. Oxon.

**F**orgive me for beginning this article for *The Angelus* issue on women with reference to a term associated by most Americans with the title of a book published by Betty Friedan in 1963 that played a central role in launching the Feminist Movement in the United States. The reason why I feel compelled to do so is because the word “mystique,” employed in this context, has a very serious and specifically twentieth-century Catholic history to it. A brief glance at this background introduces us to a modern Catholic teaching concerning what it is that a woman who wants to be a “real Christian woman” must do if she wishes to “fulfill her potential” and perfect herself. Not surprisingly, that teaching is totally contradictory to traditional Catholic thought on this subject, the nature of which I would like to illustrate through an example offered by Mexican women at the time of the Cristeros War of 1926-1929.

Use of the word “mystique” was popularized in the 1920s and 1930s, primarily in

France, Germany, and Belgium, from three interconnected sources: the lay promoters of the many-headed philosophy known as “Personalism,” Dominicans and Jesuits spreading what eventually became known as “New Theology,” and monks eager for a “pastoral” as opposed to a God-centered liturgical reform. Those embracing this term pressed both missionaries as well as militants engaged in so-called “Specialized Catholic Action” among youth and workers to the conclusion that their essential evangelical task was that of recognizing the particular “spirit”—again, the “mystique”—most passionately stimulating the distinct group to which they ministered. Once that specific, invigorating mystique had been isolated, the labor of the activist then became one of “witnessing” to its obvious inherent value, since it could not possibly exercise the vital, passionate impact that it did on the groups in question unless the Holy Spirit were somehow behind it, moving its members away from narrow, self-interested, purely individual goals towards full Christian perfection as

communal-minded “persons.”

What might be labeled the ideology of “mystique-ism” is really nothing more than yet another naturalist Enlightenment recipe for accepting *fallen* nature on its own marred terms, dressed up rhetorically by modern sophistic arguments. Its association of the voice of the Holy Spirit with “vital passions” cannot help but hand over the teaching and sacramental office to the strongest, most willful, most bullying elements of the communities that it targets, with all serious correction of truly narrow sinfulness and real transformation in Christ being abandoned as obstacles to the development of a Divine Plan whose real character it so badly distorts. Under its spell, the duty of Catholics becomes that of keeping their mouths shut, “witnessing” to the triumph of the human will masquerading as that of God, and “accompanying” unrepentant bullies in their work of oppression and ultimate self-destruction. “Mystique-ism” leads to the perfection of monsters; not of Christians.

“Mystique” hunters of the 1920s and 1930s were excited by the thought of witnessing to and accompanying all the contemporary vital forces around them, with Fascist and Communist groups at the top of the list. Let us briefly explore the deeply anti-Catholic consequences for all communities following such distorted guidelines for perfection by returning to our current topic concerning the large community encompassing half of the human race: women. Under “mystique-ism’s” dictates, willful, bullying women ready to impose their uncorrected and sinful desires upon all who share their gender become the determinants of the “feminine mystique” to which all Catholic evangelists must “witness.” The Holy Spirit will brook no obstacles being placed in their totally inward-looking, elitist, self-degrading path. Both the Magisterium as well as a pastoral-minded Liturgy must be reshaped according to the purely naturalist truths the oppressors reveal to us, along with the ever more grotesque practical and moral changes these entail. Toughness, corporate aggressiveness, unrestrained ambition economically and politically, as well as joyful openness to sexual promiscuity and abortion become the marks of the fulfilled and perfect-

ed woman. Indeed, they become the signposts pointing to the female Catholic saint as well.

Honest believers can easily smell a rat and understand that “mystique-ism” exalts a revolutionary travesty of the meaning of feminine fulfillment and perfection. For, as St. James tells us in the Epistle bearing his name, every good and perfect gift comes from outside of us, from above, from the Father of Lights, and not from heeding the inward desires of souls that have been directed away from the achievement of God’s good plan for man and nature by Original Sin. When we look purely to ourselves for the source of our perfection, we condemn our souls to shriveling and death.

A truly Catholic example of identifying “what a Christian woman must do” in this earthly valley of tears, and at a moment when changing circumstances seemed to call for further and possibly unconventional action on her part, comes from Mexico, in the very same years that “mystique-ism” was rising to the fore in Europe. Those wishing to explore in greater detail what I will merely summarize below should read an article by Sister Barbara Miller, “The Role of Women in the Cristeros Rebellion,” published in *The Americas* in January of 1984 (Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 303-323).

Most Americans are unaware of the brilliant Mexican Catholic Social Movement born in the years preceding the Revolution that erupted in 1910. This came to full maturity in battles against an increasingly anticlerical government in the decades that followed; a conflict at first fought peacefully, but then ultimately by force of arms in the Cristeros War of 1926-1929. Part of that Movement was distinctively feminine: the *Union de Damas Catolicas Mejicanas*. Founded in 1912, the *Damas Catolicas* really blossomed from 1920 onwards as one of the four central branches of Blessed Anacleto Gonzalez Flores’ (1888-1927) national *Union Popular* and then his *Liga Nacional Defensora de la Libertad Religiosa*.

The *Damas Catolicas* recognized that Mexican society was facing many new problems raising social justice and moral questions, including those connected with young women independently entering more and more into the public workforce. Their answer to these

developments was not to investigate their own passionate feelings about such matters, followed by a call for alterations in Church teaching, liturgy, and morality to respond to them. Rather, it was to promote more extensive access to quality Catholic education and devout reception of the Sacraments so as to be able to confront the changing world around them with a deeper understanding of the Faith and the need for Grace: both of them coming from outside themselves, “from above, from the Father of Lights.”

It was to assure the proper fulfillment of this outward-looking, basically educative mission that the *Damas* in 1926 became more activist than they had ever dreamed beforehand. During that year, the revolutionary government significantly tightened its controls over the Roman Catholic Church, closing large numbers of Catholic schools and expelling the teaching religious, many of them women, many of them foreigners, from their houses and the churches serving them. The *Damas* moved from dispatching simple letters of protest to militant street action, to blocking the doors to schools and churches from the entry of the troops sent to dislodge religious from them. These latter actions resulted in dramatic encounters with soldiers and government ministers who often treated

the protestors brutally, beating and imprisoning numbers of them and even threatening them with sexual violence. “Men of the whole Republic, there are your models,” their journal, *La Dama Catolica*, proudly boasted on May 1st, 1926, after the first of their women had taken to the streets. “Go hide your shame in the dark caverns of our forests.”

Calls to further, still more unconventional feminine action came by the end of that year with the outbreak of actual hostilities in the Cristeros War, to which the *Liga* gave its full support and sought to direct. Once again, women judged what was proper for them to do in the midst of this terrible crisis on the basis not of their passionate internal feelings, but with reference to what needed to be accomplished to ensure external access to the teachings of the Faith and transforming sacramental grace. Dealing with the latter necessity became particularly dramatic since the government’s effort to determine which clerics it would or would not allow to perform Church services had gone so far that the bishops suspended all regular sacramental activity to avoid it.

By June of 1927, Mexican women had formed *Las Brigadas Femeninas de Santa Juana de Arco*, to whose success they bound themselves with vows to resist the revolutionary

**The Union of Mexican Catholic Ladies was founded in 1912 for charitable and philanthropic works.**



**Peaceful protesters standing against President Plutarco Calles's law forbidding religious practice in public.**

## Viva Cristo Rey!



Women while mostly engaged in gun and ammunition running, as well as nursing, openly fought as well.



government to the death. At their height, these “Feminine Brigades of St. Joan of Arc” numbered fifty six squadrons enrolling twenty five thousand militants. But their story is a complicated one, their members including or at least being aided by three types of women: the *señoras*, the *religiosas*, and the *jovenes*.

As far as I can determine, the *Damas Catolicas*, composed mostly of middle- and upper-class women from the very start of their apostolate, formed the bulk of the *señoras*. These women could not bring themselves to accept an actual fighting role in the Cristeros War, but did absolutely everything that they could to support the cause. The *Damas* courageously remained the active, open “voice” of the movement for the defense of Catholic freedom, printing broadsheets against the government and even organizing illegal processions in honor of Christ the King. Members hid hunted priests and wounded fighters, raising money to ransom captive prisoners and provide for the families of those who were fighting.

A second militant component, represented by the *religiosas*, the female teaching religious, played a less passive role. Unlike the *señoras*, they either had to flee to Cristero-held territory or go underground, often living under conditions of extreme harshness, moving from den to den, and sometimes suffering an imprisonment and bestial treatment therein. Their chief apostolate was to sustain the spirit of the soldiers. They prepared meals for and nursed Cristeros in towns in which they could function openly, organizing espionage

networks for them in places where they had to hide. In fact, they even told the great Cristero General, Enrico Gorostieta (1888-1929), that they were ready to take up arms alongside the regular male soldiery if absolutely necessary. “We were young,” one of them said later, “but we suffered for Christ enthusiastically. I am happy to have suffered in that time.” They were ready to carry on “until victory or death.” “Fulfillment of their personal needs” meant nothing to them whatsoever.

Finally, the third segment, the *jovenes*, the young, overwhelmingly lower-class in background, while also seemingly mostly engaged in gun and ammunition running, as well as nursing, openly fought as well. In June of 1929, one of the founders of the *Brigadas*, Luz Laraza de Uribe, better known as “General” Tesia Richaud, was captured, beaten and tortured. She died not for the victory of the feminine mystique but for the glory of her Savior, her final words of “*Viva Cristo Rey*” preparing her path to true perfection and eternal life in heaven. Is it any wonder that one of the Cristero leaders rhetorically asked the question: “What would the Mexican men be if the Mexican women did not exist?” One answer to that query is that they would have lacked a brilliant example of what all Catholics must do *properly* to “fulfill themselves.”

*Señoras*, *religiosas*, and *jovenes* all did what they believed that they had to do in order to keep the outside channels of the Faith and Grace open to themselves and their loved ones. Although the end of the Cristero War was a messy one, involving much in the way

of betrayal of the cause by an all too accommodating Vatican and those Mexican bishops in alliance with it, by 1940 the situation of Catholics in that troubled country had significantly improved. Mexican women of all of the three categories that appear to have played some role in the general labor of the Brigades of St. Joan of Arc then asked nothing better than to return to more quiet educative tasks to perfect and transform themselves in Christ.

Although an examination of the collapse of civilizations provides us with the dreary sight of one sinking ship after another, such gloom and doom is usually relieved by the identification of at least some political, social, or cultural vessel still sufficiently seaworthy to allow those seeking to escape a given historical tsunami some viable ark on which to survive. What comes most readily to mind in this regard is the situation in the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D., where the complete ruin threatened by the dissolution of the secular imperial order under the pressure of barbarian invasions was step by step averted through the unexpected political efforts of wise and holy popes and bishops whose real mission was nevertheless dedicated to the creation of a supernatural community.

No such solace can be found in the midst of our contemporary catastrophe. Today, literally every single social pillar has been diverted from its proper function to grotesque ends. All of them—Family, Labor, Capital, Education, State, and Church—exalt naturalist Enlightenment *mystiques* demanding submission, as they always do, to the triumph of the willful, passionate powers that dictatorially define what these mean. Each has been so perverted that its chief function has become that of drowning the individuals it was meant to help clamber aboard its distinctive ark to avoid the floodwaters of earthly misery. All forces essential for the creation, preservation, and exaltation of the lives of human persons are united as never before in assuring individual degradation and destruction, with the current Pontiff serving as Supreme Spokesman for “mystique-ism,” “witnessing” and “accompanying” the reigning Oligarchs

in their oppression of all men and women of good will.

Good popes forced by historical circumstances in Late Antiquity to undertake certain tasks that were not intended to be part of their mission were at least themselves also servants of a living social institution and took their responsibility to maintain the full Catholic Tradition seriously. It is now atomistic individuals, stripped almost entirely of communal aid, who are in the unenviable position of having to assume a much wider gamut of responsibilities totally on their own.

What is an individual woman, thrown back on her own devices, to do under such alarming conditions? Under no circumstances is she to turn inward to consult “the feminine mystique.” She can spare herself the effort because this, as usual, will be infallibly defined and shoved down her throat by the most aggressive ideologues and criminals in union with the Global Oligarchy of our day anyway. Her effort will only serve their cause.

Instead, she is to do what Catholic women—just like Catholic men—have always been obliged to do: aim her mind and spirit outward and upward, to the correction and transformation in Christ that alone will truly fulfill and perfect her. To a large degree that means simply holding firm to the Tradition, for, as Archbishop Lefebvre said, “our future lies in our past,” and it is our duty to pass on what we have received from that Tradition untrammelled. But to hand down that Tradition effectively under the dictatorship of the ruling Oligarchy today will mean imitating the activist example of the Mexican *señoras, religiosas, y jovenes* at the time of the Cristeros, if only to carry on the basic familial mission of protecting one’s loved ones. Mistakes will be made in the process—there is no doubt about it. But, as Napoleon was wont to say, when battle is forced upon us, *on s’y engage et puis on voit*—one engages the enemy and sees what happens. The *unum necessarium* is to look to the supernatural message of the Cross and not to the natural one of the willfully manipulated and sinful *mystique*. *Christus vincit; Christus regnat; Christus imperat. Viva Cristo Rey!*





# St. Catherine of Siena

## Esto Vir

Michael Cassman

### Virgin, Hermit, Mystic

**C**aterina di Jacopo di Benincasa was the twenty-second child born to devout parents in the Republic of Siena on March 25, 1347. Naturally speaking, Catherine had very little hope of being anything greater than ordinary and never learned to write.

Before most children are prepared to examine their own conscience, Catherine began experiencing visions of Christ and the saints. By the age of seven, she had consecrated her virginity to Our Lord.

Catherine's adolescent years were filled with many tribulations. On account of her striking beauty, her parents strongly pressured her to take a husband, but the young saint was determined to live a consecrated life as a third-order Dominican Sister of Penance. Catherine went to great lengths to maintain

her promises to Our Lord and marred her appearance by cutting her hair, fasting rigorously, and performing even more radical mortifications. After years of struggle and strife in her family, Catherine's parents finally relented. Her mother personally petitioned the "Mantalleta" Sisters of Penance to allow her daughter to join. After a series of rejections and further insistence from her mother, in 1366 at the age of 19, Catherine took the holy vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience within the third order Dominicans of the Sisters of Penance.

### Wife, Mother, Apostle

As a third-order religious, Catherine wore the habit of the Mantalleta Sisters but remained at home. Her room was her cloister. She barely ate, barely slept, rarely spoke, and always prayed. Her extraordinary asceticism

was rewarded with extraordinary mysticism. At the age of 21, she experienced what is called a “Mystical Marriage” with Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord appeared to Catherine together with the Blessed Virgin, saints Peter and Paul, and King David, playing his harp. Our Lord praised her abandonment of the pleasures and vanities of the world, He bid her make a promise that she kept faithfully all her life: “I marry you to me in faith, your Creator and Savior. Keep this faith unspotted until you come to me in heaven and celebrate the marriage that has no end.”

During this mystical marriage, Catherine described a ring that Our Lord gave her that she wore on her right hand. Though she could see it at all times it was kept invisible to the rest of the world. Likewise, Catherine was also permitted to share in the suffering of her Bridegroom by receiving the mark of the *stigmata*, at first visibly, and then hidden at her request. Following what her spiritual director called “the Marriage,” Our Lord introduced Catherine’s new mission: to leave her cell and grow in the love of God through the love of neighbor, following His Providence wherever He should lead.

Strengthened by a divine promise to support her in this new mission, Catherine left her cell and began her public life. As the Black Plague raged in Europe, she tended the sick and buried the dead with her own hands. She fed the hungry and clothed the naked. With ardent zeal and supernatural wisdom, she preached the wonders of God and recalled many sinners to repentance. Bishops granted extraordinary faculties to traveling clergymen, allowing them to follow Catherine as she preached so as to hear the multitude of confessions she inspired from her listeners.

Catherine’s ministry soon drew a band of devout followers; a family of holy penitents who all called her “Mother,” “*mamma*.” She was a true mother, loving, compassionate, and fervent for their spiritual growth and eternal happiness. Her mission was confirmed by miracles as well. She worked healings, multiplied food to feed the hungry, expelled demons, and prophesied.

The saint’s fame spread like wildfire, reaching both secular and ecclesiastical authori-

ties. God gave her such wisdom that princes, priests, bishops, and even the Holy Father himself, on multiple occasions, sought her counsel. Though unlearned and unable to write, she dictated hundreds of letters advising Pontiffs and princes during one of the most trying times in the Church’s history. Through her many epistles, she provoked reform in the Church, inspired a new Crusade, and to a greater or lesser degree, brought an end to the Avignon Papacy.

Though the years of her ministry were marked with success, growth, and countless conversions, there were great difficulties for Catherine and many occasions for passive mortification as she met hostility on numerous fronts. Jealous sisters and religious spread horrific rumors attacking her virtue, attributing her miracles to the work of the devil, her successful preaching to attractively-worded heresy, and many who were unable to accept her Divine mission criticized her conduct as unbecoming of a woman, let alone a woman of God.

In her thirty-third year, her physical strength began to fail. Catherine was unable to consume any food but the Holy Eucharist, leaving her body emaciated to the point of death. In January of 1380, her health saw a sudden plunge that coincided with the people of Rome rebelling against the Holy Father.

As her health rapidly declined, Catherine was rendered unable to walk on her own. On some days she could only move her hands and feet, on others she could hardly speak. She still survived on the Eucharist alone, her only sustenance.

She suffered intensely for thirteen weeks, and her spiritual director records that her pains increased with each passing day. In her final hours, she was strengthened by the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Penance, and the Apostolic blessing from her priestly sons. On the last day of April 1380, St. Catherine departed this world to be eternally united to her Bridegroom.



Frescoes by Alessandro Franchi and Gaetano Marinelli, 1896.

- ❖ Catherine's mother sees her daughter climbing the stairs suspended in the air.
- ❖ Catherine cutting off her long hair.
- ❖ Catherine's father finds her praying with the Dove of the Holy Spirit above her head.
- ❖ Catherine gives her cloak to Jesus in the guise of a poor man.
- ❖ Jesus offering Catherine a crown of gold and a crown of thorns.



# The Spiritual Doctrine of St. Catherine of Siena

## Duty of State

Despite her own marvelous gifts of mysticism, miracles, and ecstasies, Catherine never lost track of what she calls the “ordinary way” to sanctity. In her *Dialogue*, St. Catherine explains that there is a bridge uniting Heaven and Earth. Growing in virtue by faithfully performing one’s duty of state is the “ordinary way” to pass from Earth to Heaven across the bridge of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Rationality, Freedom, Deified Humanity

“Open your eyes and look within me and you will see the dignity and beauty of my reasoning creature.” Thus God spoke to St. Catherine as recorded in her *Dialogue*.

This is one of the greatest treasures of St. Catherine’s spiritual legacy: *our rationality is the image and likeness of God in our souls*. It is our eternal soul, able to know and love, which makes us like God.

Our Lord revealed to St. Catherine that meditating on the infinite wisdom of God reveals the true glory and beauty of the human soul because our rationality *is* the very image and likeness of God. By this means we find ourselves in Him and Him in us.

But God not only made us rational, He also made us free. St. Catherine in her writings asserts that the greatest gift God gave to man was his free will.

Oh inestimable and sweetest fire of love, how clearly you show forth, with this gift of freedom, the excellence of your rational creature!

In a somewhat spectacular assertion, St. Catherine applies a passage from the Gospel of St. Matthew to God Himself at the moment of our creation:

“Let it be done as you wish,” says Almighty God to each one of us, “I am making you free, so that you may be subject to nothing but me.”

## Love of God to Love of Neighbor

Recognizing this inherent glory and beauty of the human soul reflecting the infinite



St. Catherine Receiving the Stigmata.

love and wisdom of God, we cannot help but realize that we must love in others that which is the object of God's love in them. Seeing the love of the Creator for all His rational creatures, the loving soul naturally spreads its love for the Creator to its fellow creatures. St. Catherine writes:

The love that the soul sees that God has for her, she, in turn, extends to all other creatures. . . she immediately feels compelled to love her neighbor as herself, for she sees how supremely she herself is loved by God, beholding herself in the wellspring of the sea of the Divine Essence.

It is this love that motivated St. Catherine throughout her heroic apostolic ministry. She saw clearly the beauty and worth of every human soul and worked tirelessly to help them on the way to salvation.

### **Weak, Fallen, but Unafraid**

Despite this profound understanding of the glory and beauty of the human soul, St. Catherine was in no way naive about our fallen nature. During her time, (much like our own), there was widespread disgrace, depravity, and public scandal at every level of the Church.

However, rather than focusing on the tragedy of sin and the justice of righteous retribution, St. Catherine chose to focus on sin as an opportunity for God to bring a soul closer to Him. "I always pluck the roses from the thorns," the Lord told her, "endless are the ways of my Providence to draw sinners out of the guilt of mortal sin." Everything is an opportunity for grace.

Rather than focusing on the sickness of the soul, St. Catherine focused on the remedy, the saving power of the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. She referred to Christ as a God of seemingly "uncontrollable love" made manifest in His Holy Incarnation. She explains that the actions of our God are so incredible, so beyond what our weak intellects would call "reasonable," that to bring them about He must be consumed by some divine "madness" and "drunkenness" of love for His creatures.

The supernatural perspective of this great saint strengthened her and her followers during one of the worst crises in the Church's

two-thousand-year history. Amid rampant clerical immorality, corruption, and schism, Catherine received a special revelation from God that we should all take very much to heart. . . In a word, that the sins of the clergy should not lessen our reverence for them. God Told St. Catherine:

The reverence you pay to [priests] is not actually paid to them but to me, in virtue of the Blood I have entrusted to their ministry. . . And just as the reverence is done to me, so also is the irreverence. . . You should hold [these sinful ministers] out to me with tears and great desire, so that I in my goodness may clothe them with the garment of charity. . . Then I will let myself be constrained by the longing, tears, and prayers of my servants, and will be merciful to my bride by reforming her with good and holy shepherds.

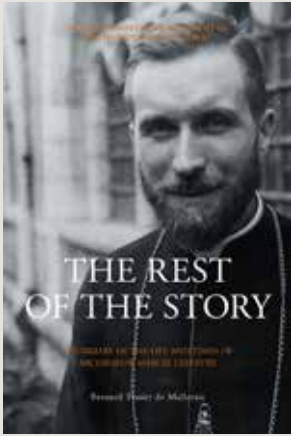
Despite scandalous and sinful behavior from even the highest ranks of the clergy, we must never lose reverence or respect for their office or the indelible mark upon their unworthy souls. To paraphrase St. Catherine, we must never abandon hope because of the thorns, but ever rejoice because of the roses.

### **Discover St. Catherine**

To truly love St. Catherine, we must learn about her. Here are some helpful resources to more deeply discover the life and legacy of St. Catherine of Siena, "the saint of our humanity." May she intercede for us for the grace to be taken with Divine Charity, who has so liberally loved us!

### **Literature & Resources**

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# Rest of the Story

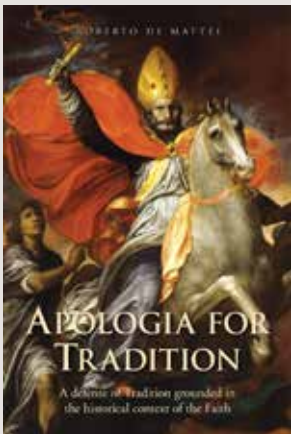
For nearly two thousand years the Catholic Mass was said in the same manner everywhere in the western world, regardless of nation or nationality. But in the 20th century that ceased to be true. Profound changes that had begun far earlier culminated in the Second Vatican Council and the creation of a new theology, the effect of which was a new form of worship. Up until this point in history, few laymen had ever heard the story of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. Fewer still knew that he was a missionary in the fields of Africa, Bishop of Dakar, Apostolic Delegate to West Africa, or even that he was appointed as the head of the international priestly order of the Holy Ghost Fathers. How he became known as a conservative leader and a voice for all those looking to oppose modernism was known by fewer still.

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# Women's Ordination

Michael Warren Davis

**E**ven when I was a boy, growing up in the Episcopal Church, my favorite part of our Sunday service was the Lord's Supper. Our parish thought it was definitely on the "high" end of the liturgical spectrum, complete with acolytes and altar rails. Our vicar was a very kind, intelligent young lady named Ruth. She had two children, and her husband was the bishop's chauffeur. Every Sunday, she would celebrate what Catholics call a Sung Mass, complete with acolytes and altar rails.

Ours was the last rural parish in the Diocese of Massachusetts, so our service was a little "hillbilly deluxe." It paled in comparison to the Church of the Advent: the grand Anglo-Catholic church on Beacon Hill in Boston. Still, our liturgy was miles higher than the local Catholic church.

Anyway, near the end of the service, we would all genuflect and then quietly process to the front. Then we'd kneel at the rail. Finally, Ruth would come by with the bread and say, "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life." We'd say *Amen*, eat the bread, and then shuffle back to our pew.

Yes, I loved it—though didn't know what

exactly it was that I loved. Like most Protestants, I believed in the Real Presence; and, like most Protestants, I couldn't begin to tell you what that meant. It seemed to me that Queen Elizabeth I got it right:

*'Twas God the word that spake it,  
He took the bread and brake it,  
And what the word did make it,  
That I believe and take it.*

Which is to say, "Beats me."

Nevertheless, the Communion service always made me feel close to the Lord. I imagined myself like the Apostles at the Last Supper, eating and drinking with Jesus: their master, their teacher, their God, their friend. I felt privileged to be joining with my fellow disciples in worship. I felt real sorrow for my sins—the sins that fixed Him to the Cross.

More than that, however, I felt a tremendous sense of relief. Christ had won the battle. He triumphed over death. I'd fought with the Enemy, and yet not only did He pardon me, but He offered to share His victory. What more could I ask for?

Then, when I was about fifteen, something very strange happened. It was an ordinary

service on an ordinary Sunday. Towards the end, we all genuflected and then quietly processed to the front. We knelt at the rail. Finally, Ruth came by with the bread and said, “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life.” I said *Amen*, ate the bread, then shuffled back to my pew.

As I knelt down to pray, I was startled by this horrible feeling growing in my stomach. It was equal parts hunger and despair, as though all the food in the world had been eaten up and none would ever grow again. I don’t know how else to describe it, except that my soul felt like a desert. I’ve never felt so empty or so lonely as I did that day.

My father noticed at once that something was wrong. On the drive home, my father kept glancing over at me. Finally, he asked, “Are you okay?”

Suddenly, I burst into tears. I cried so hard that he pulled off the road. To be honest, I had no idea what was wrong myself. Then a thought appeared in my mind, as though someone had flipped a switch and turned on all the lights. Through my tears I said, “I want to be Catholic.”

\* \* \*

Well, I didn’t. It’s hard to believe looking back, but I didn’t.

I’d been attending Catholic schools since fifth grade, and until that moment I hadn’t the faintest desire to join the Church.

Well, that’s not quite true. I asked my parents to convert once, when I was about eleven, because I hated being the only kid who didn’t go up for Communion during school Masses. Then I learned that I could follow my classmates up to the sanctuary, cross my arms and receive a blessing. I was totally inconspicuous. My interest in becoming a Catholic disap-

peared at once.

Like I said, the liturgy at my little parish church was much better than that of the local Catholic church. And, once I could drive, I’d go into Boston to worship at the Advent. To those who have never witnessed really good Anglo-Catholic liturgy, I can’t begin to describe its beauty. For those who have, I needn’t try.

To quote G.K. Chesterton, my fellow former Anglican: “I can speak, I think, for many other converts when I say that the only thing that can produce any sort of nostalgia or romantic regret, any shadow of homesickness in one who has in truth come home, is the rhythm of Cranmer’s prose.” He certainly speaks for me.

My high school was also a bastion of Modernism. That’s a word I never use lightly, but here it’s quite accurate. Most of our religion teachers told us that the Church would “evolve” in its views on homosexuality. I distinctly remember one of them saying, in an offhand sort of way, that the Church would also “grow out” of the papacy. (What she would grow *into*, she didn’t say.)

And, of course, not a single member of the faculty would defend the all-male celibate priesthood. It was taken for granted that women would be ordained within ten or twenty years. Hopefully the Church wouldn’t “grow out” of the papacy before then, so one of these new priestesses can ascend St. Peter’s throne before we stow it away with Torquemada’s thumbscrews and Tetzels ledger.

In other words, I was led to believe that the Catholic Church would become exactly like the Episcopal Church, except with bad hymns. Of course, I was quite wrong. An ugly Mass can still be valid; an Anglican Mass, no





matter how beautiful, cannot. But that didn't occur to my teenage self, and so my desire to become Catholic simply withered on the vine.

\* \* \*

Now, fast-forward about eight years. It's 2015 or thereabouts. I recently finished college and have embarked on a career in journalism, with a strong focus on religion. I have a special hatred for *Anglicanorum coetibus*, Pope Benedict XVI's apostolic constitution establishing the Anglican Ordinariates.

The Ordinariates are a confederation of Catholic parishes that celebrate the Mass in a rite heavily influenced by the Book of Common Prayer. They allow Anglicans to keep the best of our liturgical tradition—the “Anglican patrimony,” they call it—*within* the Catholic Church. Naturally, most orthodox Anglicans are taking Benedict up on his offer.

I think it's a travesty. It doesn't matter how liberal the Anglican Communion becomes, I say. The Church of England is still our mother-church. How can we abandon her now when she needs us most? Where was our sense of duty, of loyalty? What of our faith that Christ would not allow the Gates of Hell to prevail against His Church?

(Of course, I was wrong to put my faith in the Anglican Communion. But I hope the faithful of the Society of St. Pius X will appreciate the position I found myself in. I was the last traditionalist Anglican!)

Anyway, by now, I've a bit of a name for myself. Earlier this year—that is, 2015—I was asked to write a tract called *Mere Anglicanism* on the same theme. Then my friend Ryan says to me, “If you're going to write a whole book attacking the Ordinariate, you should at least go see it first.” Why not?

There's an Ordinariate parish in Boston,

comprised mostly of former members of the Church of the Advent. They meet in the basement chapel of a diocesan parish: a plain, windowless room with a plain table-altar. Ryan hasn't come along, so I didn't know anyone. I sit in the back pew, alone.

The Mass is uneventful. It reminds me of the Advent, though not nearly so grand. The priest is a kind-looking older man in a moustache who preaches like a Southern Baptist. He has what we Anglicans call “enthusiasm,” and we don't approve of enthusiasm.

Then it comes time for Communion. Just like in my school days, I stay inconspicuous by following all the Catholics up to the altar with my arms crossed. To my surprise, these Catholics kneel! I thought this was part of the “Anglican patrimony.” Growing up around Novus Ordo parishes, I'd only seen altar rails in Episcopal churches. (A few weeks later, when I attended a Latin Mass, I realized that, yes, Catholics have been known to kneel before the altar from time to time.)

So, here I am, kneeling in the basement of this ugly church, surrounded by traitors and cowards. I kick myself for wasting this Sunday with papists when the Advent is just a few minutes down the road. I make a mental note to call Ryan and chew him out when I get back to my car.

I'm the last one in line, right on the left-hand side of the altar. Now, the priest—beginning from the right—begins to make his way down the rail. I hear him say to each communicant, “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.” *Amen.*

Suddenly, something stirs in me. I've never known how to describe it, except that it was like waiting at the airport for a loved one—



how you know they're coming through the gate, even when you can't see them. You just know, deep down in your bones, that they're near at hand.

As the priest goes down the line, the feeling gets stronger and stronger. The Loved One gets closer and closer. I can hear my heart pounding in my ears. Then it dawns on me: there, in that little bowl the man in the moustache is holding, *that* is Jesus Christ. It is *actually* Jesus Christ. Jesus isn't "here," as some sort of pious ambience. He's *there*, in the priest's hands. He's *there*, in the mouths of the communicants.

Then the priest paused over me and said, "I bless you in the name of the Father..."

As I made my way back to the pew, I felt the same hunger I'd felt eight years before, only there was no despair. On the contrary. I felt like a castaway who'd stumbled into a great feast.

No, that doesn't do it justice. It was like I'd spent my whole life eating a thin, slimy gruel, and someone had just put a ribeye steak under my nose.

No, that's still not right. It was as if I'd been hungry my whole life, but hadn't known there was such a thing as *food*. I didn't know the desire could be satisfied. Now I knew better.

After Mass, this kindly priest comes up to me and shakes my hand. "I don't think I've seen you here before," he says, smiling gently. "Welcome. What's your name?" Once again, tears run down my cheeks. "I want to be Catholic."

\* \* \*

Dear reader, please forgive all of the autobiography in this article. If I'm ever fortunate enough to meet you, I'll gladly prattle on about myself for hours quite happily; but

I promise that, in writing, I've more or less disciplined myself to abstain from first-person pronouns.

This is actually the one part of my life I don't like to talk about. I find it embarrassing. It's the best joke I'll ever tell, and I'm just the punchline. I feel like Sarah, the wife of Abraham: "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me."

But more than that, I want to make a point about the theme of this issue, "The Church and Women." And that point is this: our priestess Ruth was a kind, intelligent woman with a true devotion to Jesus. I might even go so far as to call her *pastoral*. But she wasn't really a priest. She couldn't act *in persona Christi*. She couldn't celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. She couldn't feed her flock with the Body and Blood of Our Blessed Lord.

I think it's easy for our progressive friends to lose sight of this very important (yet very simple) point: when it comes to the question of (say) whether women should be ordained or not, it doesn't actually matter what we think. It matters what God thinks. And, according to God, if you try to ordain a woman, nothing will happen. It won't "take."

Of course, those progressives have heard that argument before. The problem isn't in their heads. It's in their hearts. Virtually every error in Church history has arisen, not from a lack of intelligence, but from a lack of gratitude. We insist that everything make sense to us, that everything fit neatly into our own paltry little worldview. It's an aversion to mystery. It's a refusal to be awed and delighted, humbled and afraid, chastened and comforted. That's why Christ told us to become like children.

So, you'll notice that all of those who feel



that women are entitled to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders also feel that pro-choice Catholic politicians are entitled to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Some of them might be won over (eventually) by theological arguments. But for most of them the problem runs much deeper. They want Christ, but they want Him on their terms. They feel entitled to their own Christ, who agrees with their own progressive sensibilities.

That isn't how the Church sees it. The Church reminds us, in her loving, gentle way, that we're like the Canaanite woman. We're dogs who are fortunate to eat even the crumbs that fall from their master's table. And yet the Master feeds us His own body and blood! If your response is, "And that's very nice of Him, but why would He only hire *men* to serve at the table?"—well, you may want to reassess your priorities.

In a 2014 interview, Seán Cardinal O'Malley touched on the subject of women's ordination and made a very important point. "If I were founding a church," he once told an interviewer, "I'd love to have women priests. But Christ founded it, and what He has given us is something different."

I expect that quote will raise a few eyebrows. But notice something: you will never in a thousand years hear progressives make that argument for their own camp. You will never hear a Modernist say, "If I were founding a church, I'd love to have an all-male priesthood. But Christ founded it, and what He has given us is something different."

Advocates for women's ordination never even pretend as though they're simply humbling themselves to Christ's will. And that's also true of advocates for admitting pro-choice politicians to Holy Communion. And

of advocates for same-sex "marriage." And of advocates for contraception. And on and on, down the list of new-fangled errors.

This is why, fundamentally, the battle between orthodoxy and heresy isn't waged for our minds, but for our hearts. Error stems not from stupidity, but from pride.

It's also why heretics always tend overwhelmingly to be trained in theology. As a matter of fact, in his book on the Arian crisis of the 4th century, St. John Henry Newman said:

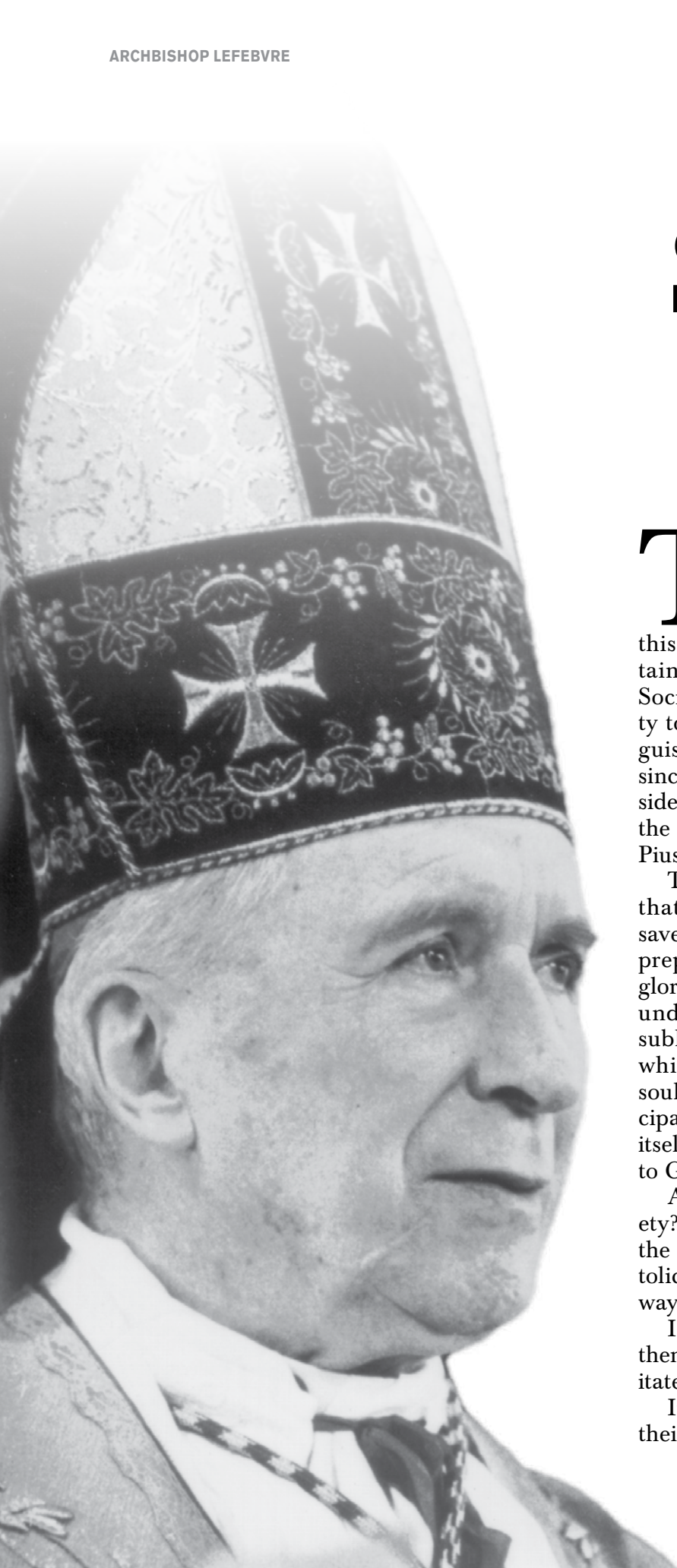
Perhaps it was permitted, in order to impress upon the Church at that very time passing out of her state of persecution to her long temporal ascendancy, the great evangelical lesson, that, not the wise and powerful, but the obscure, the unlearned, and the weak constitute her real strength.

The obscure and the unlearned don't put their own theories and ideologies before Christ and His Church—if only because they don't *have* theories or ideologies. Those are vices for the intelligentsia. So it is that the smartest men in the world come up with the worst possible ideas.

Of course, there's no greater exemplar of Christian humility than Our Blessed Mother: the only mortal since Eve whose reason wasn't stained by original sin. And yet Mary wasn't made an Apostle. She didn't leave us with a single epistle. She didn't preach. All we have from her is a prayer—a prayer of gratitude, no less. "The Almighty has done great things for me," she sang, "and holy is His Name."

That was enough for Our Lady. May it be enough for all of us.





# Sermon t

April 10th, 1983

**T**oday, on this Quasimodo Sunday, Providence has reunited almost all the religious of the Society of Saint Pius X. The occasion of this important reunion, which will certainly be recorded in the annals of the Society's history, gives me the opportunity to be more specific about what distinguishes the sisters of Saint Pius X. And since, in everything, the end must be considered, we will therefore firstly ask what the aim of the sisters of the Society Saint Pius X is.

The general aim is, without a doubt, that of all religious congregations: to save one's soul, render glory to God, and prepare oneself to participate in God's glory for eternity—and for this, to choose undoubtedly the surest, and the most sublime and beautiful way, the one to which Our Lord Jesus Christ calls the souls whom He chooses. This is the principal aim of every soul who consecrates itself to God, who gives itself completely to God.

And what is the aim of the Sisters' Society? It is to collaborate with the priests of the Society of Saint Pius X in their apostolic work. This the sisters can do in three ways:

In a material way, by taking upon themselves duties which relieve and facilitate the priests' tasks in the apostolate.

In a pastoral way, by helping priests in their sacerdotal ministry: whether it be

# o the SSPX Sisters

## – St. Michael en Brenne, France

Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

teaching catechism, assisting in the work of retreats, or also, for example, visiting the sick, taking care of primary schools, and working with girls. The Sisters can thus pastorally help the Fathers in their ministry.

They can likewise help them spiritually by their prayers and sacrifices. And I think that this is one of the reasons why the sisters have an additional hour of adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament every day. There they entrust to Our Lord all the intentions of the priory, of the works in which they are employed, to which they devote themselves, so that God may bless these works and sanctify those who are devoted to them: firstly, the priests, the religious themselves, and then all the people who devote themselves to the apostolic and missionary work of the Society's priories, schools, and works.

This, then, is the end for which the Congregation was founded.

And what are the bonds between the Society of the priests and that of the sisters? Well, these bonds are firstly bonds of origin. Indeed, in the statutes that I had the occasion to draw up as founder of the Priestly Society, Providence permitted that an allusion to the religious was made. And thanks be to God, this was helpful when my opponents had the opportunity to criticize me for the foundations of the sisters and the brothers. I said, "Excuse me, but in the statutes which have been approved by Rome, approved by Cardinal Wright and the Congregation of the Clergy, allusions were made to the foundation of

the sisters and the brothers." Consequently, I would say that the sisters' Society has already been implicitly recognized by Rome, simultaneously with the priestly Society. Without a doubt, the approbation has not yet officially been given for the Society independently of the priestly one, but we can hope that with time, God will give this official approbation to the Congregation of the religious. There is consequently a profound bond of origin, willed by Providence, between the priestly Society and the sisters' Society.

There is also a particular bond, I would say, of doctrine and spirituality. And this, in my opinion, is very important. If the priestly Society has at the heart of its spirituality the priesthood and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass—and this also providentially, because of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, since it is precisely the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which has been the object of degradation, alterations, and changes which have disfigured it... It thus seemed to me that it was God's Will for priests to be conscious of the importance of their priesthood, conscious that to offer the Sacrifice is the reason for the priesthood. The priests of the Society therefore devote themselves in a profound way to the study of the grandeur and sublimity of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and to find therein the whole mystery, *Mysterium Fidei*, the Mystery of our Faith, the central Mystery of our Faith from which everything flows.

I think, therefore, that the sisters' spirituality is likewise to rediscover what the heart of

Therefore, let us practice this common work in charity, by both clearly specifying and distinguishing tasks; then charity can be practiced, and its fruit will be magnificent. We have seen splendid fruits of this collaboration of priests and religious in the missions, extraordinary apostolic fruit, alas, practically ruined today by the lack of vocations, by the lack of supernatural spirit, by the lack of the spirit of faith.

the Church is, what its treasure is, the treasure which Our Lord Jesus Christ gave to His Apostles on Holy Thursday. In instituting the priesthood, He was giving them His body, blood, soul, and divinity, all the graces which flow from His Sacrifice. We must find this treasure again. We must love it. We must seek all our graces in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in the Eucharistic presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I think that this is very important. It is a profound bond which unites the priests and the Sisters' Society.

Thus, bond of origin, bond of spirituality, and bond of apostolate. This being said, the sisters' Society is an independent society. The day when relations become normal between the SSPX as well as the sisters' Society and Rome, it is obvious that your Society will be canonically independent.

However, I insist on the fact that the moral bonds (about which I have just spoken to you) are important, and I would even say essential, to the point that, if these bonds were broken, I do not think the sisters' Society could subsist any longer. If the religious deny their origin, if they deny their spirituality and doctrine, if they deny their apostolate, what will remain of them? What will remain of their Society? Consequently, if your Society is juridically independent, morally, before God, in the grace of God, in the grace of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the sisters' Society must remain profoundly united to the priestly Society, especially in the present circumstances when the Church's doctrine is being attacked on every side, and in a certain sense, its spirituality disintegrated.

And we can raise the question: "Will not these ties between the priestly Society and the sisters cause difficulties?" Oh, my dear Sisters, the Church has experienced these obstacles throughout its whole history. There are always

trials, misunderstandings, misconceptions; these are part of poor human nature. And of course, we saw this, for example, in the missions, where all the religious of the dioceses (God knows how many religious congregations were working in collaboration with the missionaries) such as the sisters of Cluny, the sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Castre, who were helping us a lot in the missions... There were undoubtedly difficulties sometimes, but precisely we were forced to clearly define their respective work and connection. So doing, we made sure that the different religious congregations, missionary and religious, be both sufficiently independent and collaborate in the common goal in the spirit of the Church.

So even if these difficulties exist, they must not be a reason for breaking away! This would be ridiculous! If such were the case, we could then say that if there are difficulties in a marriage, it must be broken up. It is not because a couple must make sacrifices that they must immediately think of a separation. It is not because there are difficulties in societies, and even in communities, that we must break them up, that we must break up what God Himself has established.

Therefore, let us practice this common work in charity, by both clearly specifying and distinguishing tasks; then charity can be practiced, and its fruit will be magnificent. We have seen splendid fruits of this collaboration of priests and religious in the missions, extraordinary apostolic fruit, alas, practically ruined today by the lack of vocations, by the lack of supernatural spirit, by the lack of the spirit of faith.

You may be asking yourselves: "Is our Society a contemplative or an active one?" I will answer that canonically, your Society is not a contemplative society. A contemplative society must have a strict cloister, like that of the Dominicans of the Great Order, the Benedictines, the Poor Clares, or the Carmelites. No one can enter inside the community. And they also generally have the obligation to recite the whole Divine Office. They get up early to sing Matins, Lauds. This is what char-

acterizes the contemplative congregations. So, how does the Church consider your congregation? I would say that, having an active apostolate, you are an active congregation.

Those among you who are already working in the different priories, well know how the priests are overwhelmed by their activities, requests from everywhere, work, the necessity of going out to administer a sacrament here, to teach catechism elsewhere, to say a Mass far away. The priests need your prayer. And I thank God that you have this hour of prayer in your constitutions. I am sure that this is what upholds you in this spirit of faith, piety, recollection, and silence which you have, which you manifest, and which is very important. This is very important for your own life, for your active life. Do not let yourselves be dissipated, carried away by noise and a febrile activity, but be united to God. This is what makes the grandeur of your religious life: union with Our Lord Jesus Christ, life with Him.

Congratulations to you all! Continue as you have done until now. Grow in the love of Our Lord, in the love of souls, in the love of sacrifice, in the love of the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. And draw this love from the heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Compassion, Our Lady of Sorrows. Ask her to pour all her sentiments for her Divine Son into your hearts so that you may live them.





# The Relation of the Sexes

Pauper Peregrinus

**E**very truth, even to the most humdrum, has two contrary errors. If there is only one bottle of milk in the refrigerator, then the hard-headed skeptic who insists there is not a drop of milk in the house, and the dreamer who imagines the refrigerator to be an almost limitless reservoir of milk, are both wrong. When it comes to grasping some more important, and therefore more difficult truth, it often helps to contrast it with its two opposed errors. An example of this is the relation between the sexes.

One of these two errors, contrary to the word of God, is characteristic of much ancient paganism, and also of Islam. This error sees a woman as a mere accessory of a man, of much less value than him, born only to marry and have children, and hardly a rational being. Wherever the gospel is not preached, societies of fallen human beings seem to tend inevitably to degenerate in some such a direction.

The contrary error lies in supposing that there are no distinctions between men and women apart from the obvious physical ones. This position has been characteristic of secular thought in the last century or so, influenced by Christianity but also exaggerating one aspect of it. (I shall not consider the inco-

herent, ultra-modern position that tries to combine this opinion with the claim that a person may freely choose to “identify” either as a man or woman.) We may ask people who hold this position whether they do so on the basis of evidence, and hence as something they would be willing to revise, or as a dogma, and if so, on the basis of what authority. I think they would be hard-pressed to answer.

What, then, is the Christian teaching to which these two errors are opposed? In the first place, Scripture sets before us the great dignity of each sex. Both man and woman are made “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:27). Both are called to give their free assent to the gospel, and if they do so, they become “co-heirs of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7). The 17th-century English Puritan poet John Milton was woefully wide of the mark when he wrote, in his description of our first parents in Eden, *Hee for God only, shee for God in him*, if he meant by this that Eve would not have had a direct, personal relationship with her Creator before the Fall. The grace of Christ restores us to God’s friendship, lost through original sin, and so each sex is called to a life of holiness, by the practice of the same theological and moral virtues. Hence, St. Paul writing of

the effects of baptism would say: “There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). This common vocation is expressed well in the Roman canon: asking that we may receive “some portion and society” with the saints, the priest then names eight men and seven women whom we hope to meet one day in heaven.

This teaching, though it has to do with our supernatural destiny, could not fail to leave its mark on Christian civilization in this world, humanizing the relations between the sexes. We can think here of the friendship and esteem of St. Paul for his female assistants, or of St. John Chrysostom for St. Olympias, something for which we will not find an analogy in the pagan world, and hardly in the ancient Jewish one. Yet the modern world, as Chesterton said more than a century ago, is full of Christian virtues gone mad. If the faith passes away from a civilization, but a confused memory of the equal dignity of the sexes remains, people will no longer locate that equality on the supernatural level, as the shared vocation to sanctity, but will begin to insist instead on an absolute natural equality. Then they will say that there is to be no more question of a husband’s authority in regard to his wife, and that any tendency for men to be more prominent in public life than women, and for women to be more often centered on the life of the home, must result from prejudice and unjust discrimination, and must be stamped out by the State. This way of thinking has led people to claim that the Catholic priesthood must be opened to women as to men.

We need therefore to be aware of the other side of Christian teaching, and those passages in Scripture that speak to us of the difference between the sexes. There is an abiding significance, St. Paul tells us, in the fact that Eve was created from Adam, not the other way round, and to be his helper (1 Cor. 11:8-9). One of the consequences of this is that if a woman chooses to marry, she places herself under her husband’s authority, as both St. Peter and St. Paul teach (1 Pet. 3:1; Eph. 5:22-23), following the example of our Lord (Jn. 4:16). In a

mysterious phrase, the apostle of the gentiles tells us that “the man ... is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man” (1 Cor. 11:7). What does this mean? For a married woman, her husband’s manly dignity is manifested most of all by his having so excellent a being as a woman under his authority: this is his “glory.” And the woman who chooses not to marry is also to be the glory of a Man: of the man Christ Jesus. Of course, both men and women alike are subject to Him; but we may perhaps gather from St. Paul’s words that if women enter onto the supernatural plane at all, they tend to make progress there more rapidly than men, since the movement of the spiritual life corresponds better to the inclination of their own nature. We may see this as a new application of the words of the gospel: “The first shall be last, and the last, first.”

The word of God also instructs us that the difference between the sexes is to be manifested in the liturgy of the Church. “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to use authority over the man,” writes St. Paul (1 Tim. 2:12). This does not refer to teaching in schools or universities. Nor even is the apostle forbidding a woman to become the CEO of a corporation if circumstances should so suggest. It means that the office of preaching, and the power, that is, the sacrament, of orders are reserved by divine law to the male sex. Why is this?

The simplest and best answer to this is that it is the will of Christ. In instituting the sacraments, He was divinely free. He could, had He willed, have ordained that extreme unction might be received not only by a person dangerously sick, but also by a friend on the sick man’s behalf: but He did not so will. And He could have chosen that both men and women might receive the sacrament of orders: but this was not His good pleasure.

Yet provided we accept His decision obediently, we are not forbidden to speculate in faith about the motives of it. St. Paul tells us that one such motive was the sin of Eve (1 Tim. 2:14). The Lord wills that this act of renunciation on the part of women be, as it were, a way for the sex to expiate the sin of their first member. For his part, St. Thomas Aquinas reminds us that the sacraments were

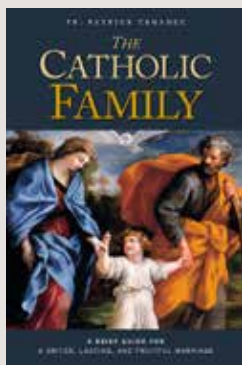
instituted as *signs*, as well as causes, of grace. Just as only a sick man can symbolize the spiritual infirmity to be removed by extreme unction, so a man has by nature a certain aptitude that a woman lacks, writes the angelic doctor, to symbolize the authority to be conferred by holy orders.

We can suggest also reasons from the work itself of the priestly ministry. A priest has to be ready to go alone into any environment, however dangerous. He will also listen, in confession, to the secrets of the heart, which may include things that are shameful or obscene. We should not be surprised if our Lord wished to shield women from such experiences, and

to put their sensibility to other uses.

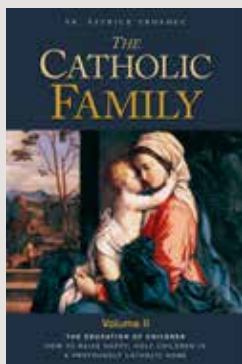
Finally, how we can speak of this subject without mentioning the Woman *par excellence*? The liturgy says to the Blessed Virgin: “Thou has destroyed all the heresies in the whole world.” This is true here as well. At the Annunciation, she destroyed the old pagan heresy, which saw woman as of little worth, when, without consulting even with St. Joseph, she welcomed God in the name of the whole race. But simultaneously she destroyed the future feminist heresy, by the very words she used: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.”

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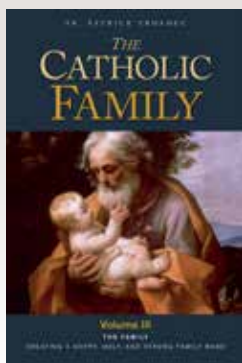
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# The Consecration

Fr. Christopher Danel

In this article we examine the moment of the Consecration in the Mass, presenting the work of Msgr. Nicholas Gehr in his fundamental liturgical commentary *The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: Dogmatically, Liturgically, and Ascetically Explained*. Msgr. Gehr was a priest of Freiburg in Breisgau whose work of liturgical research took place during the time frame spanning the pontificates of Popes Pius IX to Pius XI, including that of Pope Saint Pius X. The early years of his work were contemporaneous with the last years in the work of Dom Prosper Guéranger. (The English translation of his study appeared in 1902; the original is: Gehr, Nikolaus. *Messopfer dogmatisch, liturgisch und aszetisch erklärt*. Herder: Freiburg im Breisgau, 1877.)

## Pinnacle of the Holy Mass

**T**he moment of Consecration is the moment which is the most important and solemn, the most sublime and touching, the most holy and fruitful of the whole sacrificial celebration; for it includes that glorious and unfathomably profound work, namely, the accomplishment of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which all the marvels of God's love are concentrated. The change of the bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood can proceed from Him only who "alone effects what is wonderful": it is an act of creative omnipotence. But to this act of divine almighty power there is required a human act, human cooperation and that on the part of an ordained priest.

At his ordination the priest received the supernatural power so to pronounce the words: "This is My Body," "This is My Blood,"

such that they change the elements of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. At the Last Supper, Christ was the sole priest offering sacrifice; at the altar He is the principal Sacrificer. Whilst in the Cenacle He offered Himself without the assistance of others, He now offers Himself on the altar by the hands and mouth of the visible priest. The priest is His organ and minister. This truth clearly manifests the way and manner in which the priest performs the act of Consecration; all he does indicates plainly that he speaks and acts in the person of Christ in accomplishing the Eucharistic Sacrifice. That this may be manifest, he is directed by the Church to imitate as faithfully as possible by word and deed Christ's model act of Consecration.

The Church's liturgical act of Consecration is nothing else than the repetition and copy

of the first celebration of the Lord's Supper in the Cenaculum at Jerusalem. The priest narrates the first offering and institution of the unbloody Sacrifice by Jesus Christ, and while relating this, he performs the corresponding actions, that is, he imitates, as far as possible, the Lord and does the same as Christ did. He pronounces the effective words of Consecration in the person of Christ (*quasi ex persona ipsius Christi loquentis*, St. Thomas Aquinas). He pronounces them over the bread and wine with the intention of changing the gifts at present lying on the altar and thereby to offer up in sacrifice the Body and Blood of Christ. Plain and simple are the words of the liturgical text, as is best suited for a thing that is both ineffably sublime and divine.

### The Consecration of the Host

*Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and with eyes lifted up toward heaven, unto Thee, O God, His Almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, did bless, break and give unto His disciples, saying: Take and eat ye all of this: For this is My Body.*

*Qui pridie quam pateretur* (the day before He suffered). The Lord chose the eve of His bitter passion and death, the night on which He was betrayed, to give us by the institution of the Eucharist the most wonderful proof of His love. With desire He had longed for this hour. Before shedding His blood in torrents on the painful way of the Cross, He would pour out for us creatures the abundance of His grace, all the treasures of His love in the Sacrament of the Altar, that we might never forget what He has done and suffered for us.

*Acceptit panem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas* (He took bread into His holy and venerable hands). Saying these words, the priest also takes the Host into his hands. Holy and sanctifying, venerable and adorable beyond all expression are the hands of Christ. How often has He raised them in prayer to His Father, and extended them over men to bless them! How these hands were transpierced on the Cross with the most intolerable heat of pain! How are the hands of a priest of the Lord constituted? With holy oil were those

hands anointed and consecrated to the service of God and the salvation of souls; day and night should they be elevated to Heaven, to praise the Lord, to call down upon men His mercies and blessings.

*Et elevatis oculis in coelum ad te Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem, tibi gratias agens benedixit* (and with His eyes lifted up toward heaven, unto Thee, O God, His Almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, He did bless). While the priest pronounces these words, he performs the corresponding ceremonies, so as to imitate and do, as far as possible, what the Savior did at the institution of the Eucharist: for a moment the priest looks up at the Crucifix on the altar, and then bows His head, thereby to signify and to express Christ's thanksgiving, and he makes over the Host the sign of the Cross, thus appropriately to represent the blessing of the Savior.

Christ's looking up to His Almighty Father, as also the giving of thanks and the blessing of the bread connected therewith, indicates not only the greatness and sublimity of the mystery which He was about to accomplish, but served at the same time as a preparation for the Consecration, and as the making ready of the matter to be consecrated.

*Fregit deditque discipulis suis, dicens: Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes* (He broke and gave to His disciples, saying: Take and eat ye all of this). The Church in the celebration of the Sacrifice follows her divine Lord and Master step by step: the breaking of the sacramental species (*fregit*) and the distribution of the Eucharistic bread (*dedit*) cannot take place until after the Consecration, while the majestic thanksgiving prayer of the Preface (*gratias agens*), and the manifold blessing of the sacrificial matter (*benedixit*) have already an appropriate place before the Consecration. The priest, in the midst of a solemn silence that shuts out from him all the noise of the world, humbly bowing down at the altar, pronounces "in the person of Christ," with the deepest attention, devotion and reverence the mighty words:

**Hoc est enim Corpus meum.**

And now there is no longer bread on the altar, but under the appearances that remain of bread, Christ's Body is truly present. In a moment the power of God has wrought a series of miracles, more magnificent and glorious than all the wonders of creation. The tiny Host now contains in itself infinitely more treasures, riches and glory than are to be found on the vast expanse of the globe. By virtue of the words of Consecration, Christ's Body becomes present, veiled under the appearance of bread, and, indeed, His glorified Body, which shines in the glory of heaven; but this Body is immortal, impassible,

It is only fitting and just that we should fall down on our knees before Him.

### The Consecration of the Chalice

*In like manner, after supper, taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands: and giving thanks to Thee, He blessed, and gave to His disciples, saying: Take, and drink ye all of it: **For this is the Chalice of My Blood, of the new and eternal testament: the mystery of faith: which shall be shed for you, and for many, unto the remission of sins.** As often as you do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me.*



ble, with the Precious Blood flowing through it, vivified by the most holy soul, united to the Eternal Godhead. Therefore, in the Host Christ is present, whole and entire, the hidden Savior, with His divinity and humanity. The same God-Man who lives and reigns in heaven in inconceivable majesty and beauty, is now mysteriously and under sacramental appearances present in our very midst. The gates of heaven open and in the company of invisible choirs of angels the King of Heaven descends upon the altar, and this spot of the earth becomes a paradise; the priest holds his Creator, Redeemer and Judge in his hands.

*Simili modo postquam coenatum est, accipiens et hunc praeclarum Calicem in... manus suas* (In like manner, after supper, taking also this excellent chalice into His... hands). At these words the priest takes up the chalice in his hands and slightly elevates it. After the Old Testament Paschal Supper was over, the Lord consecrated the bread, and immediately afterward followed the Consecration of the chalice.

The Savior took "this excellent chalice" (*hunc praeclarum Calicem*): the identity of this chalice and that of the Last Supper is perfect, that is, numerically so, only after the Consecration; then there is here as there altogether

er the same Blood in both chalices: "This is the chalice of My Blood." The Savior blessed the chalice likewise with thanksgiving, as He had previously done with the bread. He then pronounced over the blessed wine those holy words which the priest now in His stead pronounces over the chalice, to change the material element into the divine Blood of Christ: *Hic est enim Calix Sanguinis mei*, "For this is the chalice of My Blood," that is, this is My Blood which is contained in the chalice. According to the common opinion these words constitute the essential formula for the Consecration of the chalice; for they signify and effect the presence of the Blood of Christ under the appearances of wine.

In the chalice is the Blood of the "new and eternal testament." At the foot of Sinai the old covenant, whose promises were only earthly, and which was to continue but for a time, was concluded with the blood of animals. But by Christ's sacrificial Blood which is in the chalice, the "new" covenant of grace was established and sealed and is called under a twofold aspect "the eternal" covenant: first, because the gifts and blessings appertaining to it are heavenly and imperishable; again, because the new covenant will ever remain in force and its validity endure to the end of days.

The exclamatory phrase in the middle: *mysterium fidei*, "the mystery of faith," indicates the unsearchable depth and obscurity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. That the God-Man shed His Blood for us on the Cross, and that He again sheds it for us in a mystical manner on the altar is an adorable divine achievement which includes in itself the sum of the most unheard-of wonders, all of which can be acknowledged and believed as true only in the light and the power of faith. Christ's sacrificial Blood in the chalice is a mystery of faith in the fullest sense of the term.

After the priest has pronounced the words of Consecration, he again genuflects, to venerate the infinitely precious and adorable Blood of Christ in the chalice. At the same time, he pronounces the words: "As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me," with which the Savior instituted the Christian priesthood and the perpetual Sacrifice of the New Law as a

commemorative celebration of His redeeming passion and death.

By the separate Consecration of the Host and of the chalice, Christ's Body and Blood are rendered present under the twofold appearances of bread and wine, that is, as sacrificed. The twofold Consecration is a mystical shedding of blood, and places before our eyes in a most lively manner the bloody death of Christ sacrificed on the Cross. The Sacrifice on the altar is, indeed, painless; for the Savior is no longer passible and can no longer suffer death. But His divinely human Heart is here inflamed with the same love of sacrifice, and is moved by the same obedience of His Father to sacrifice Himself as when He was on the Cross. This love and this obedience urged Him to sacrifice Himself mystically on the altar also under the twofold sacramental appearances. It is at the moment of Consecration that the Sacrifice is accomplished.

### The Elevation

Immediately after pronouncing the words of Consecration, the priest in all reverence elevates first the Host and afterward the chalice in like manner, lifting up the Divine Sacrificial Victim for adoration, whilst he himself keeps his eyes riveted on the Holy of Holies. The principal object of the elevation is adoration; as the celebrant genuflects before and after the Elevation, adoring with faith and humility, thus also all who assist at the Mass should be moved and impelled at the sight of the Blessed Sacrament, to render to the God and Savior therein concealed due adoration through their humble and reverent deportment, as well as by the interior oblation of themselves to Him. After the birth of Christ, heaven and earth sent adorers to the crib at Bethlehem: the same happens at the appearance of the Eucharistic Savior on the altar. Then, as St. Gregory says (Dial. IV, 58), "Heaven opens at the words of the priest, and the choirs of angels surround the altar," to admire and to adore the Divine Mysteries.

# Judging a Tree by Its Fruits

Fr. Alain Lorans, SSPX

## **After the Council opened the Church to the modern world, what future lay in store for parishes and seminaries?**

Considering the consequences of the Council's openness to the modern world for parishes and seminaries is not only for statisticians and sociologists. Considering the fruits necessarily implies wondering what tree produced them. It implies drawing a connection between effects and a cause. It implies considering a causal relation and therefore a responsibility.

And these considerations are those of a historian, a philosopher, a theologian, not a statistician or a sociologist. The latter consider *how many* and *how*, but rarely the *why* and the *wherefore*. They describe more than they explain. They make observations without seeking a cause, especially if it could look like an accusation or a search for who is responsible.

In this presentation of the way the Council opened the Church to the modern world and the influence this had on religious practice and the number of vocations, we will not disregard the facts and numbers, but we will not stop there. The facts are also effects and

they have a cause, unless we believe in spontaneous generation...

Since a topic as delicate as establishing the causal relation, and therefore a responsibility and even culpability between the Council and its fruits puts us in a position to be accused of choosing sides or being "Traditionalist," we shall simply cite the testimony of a convert from progressivism on the evolution in the Church since the Council. He will testify and the reader will be free to form his own opinion.

## **Eloquent numbers**

Let us start with some official numbers; they are neither progressivist nor traditionalist, they are simply eloquent.

In France, in the middle of the 1960's, 94% of a generation was baptized, 25% went to Mass every Sunday and 80% of children made their Solemn Communion. Today, about 2% of Catholics attend Sunday Mass (1.8% according to a survey by *Ipsos* for *La Croix* in 2017) and only about 30% of children are baptized before the age of seven.

In 1901, there were 1,733 priestly ordinations for the diocesan clergy, and in 1965, at the end of Vatican Council II, there were 646.



In 2020, there were only 46 diocesan priests ordained, which forced the seminaries of Lille and Bordeaux to close. In 2021, based on the number of deacons in the seminaries, there will be 36 diocesan priests and 54 religious priests or members of priestly societies ordained.

*La Verité des chiffres* legitimately predicts that many dioceses will have to prepare to see their presbyterium go practically extinct, especially since the low number of ordinations is concentrated in just a few dioceses, essentially Paris, Versailles and Toulon.

Based on the statistics, the editor of *La Verité des chiffres* points out two elements he believes to be absolutely essential to counter the drastic drop in priestly vocations: the sacramental life of families, and in particular, Confirmation around the age of six or seven, and the broadest possible recognition of the celebration of the traditional Mass.

Otherwise, comments Jean-Pierre Mau-gendre on the website *Renaissance catholique*, “the current trends look bound to continue,” for “the same causes produce the same effects [and *de facto*] there does not seem to be any major questioning of the principles that led to the present situation.”

He goes on to add that:

The question will inevitably arise as to whether to keep dioceses that are no longer anything more than administrative structures with no sacramental life, for lack of priests, and practically no Christian families, for lack of sacraments. But the future is in God’s hands. In 1976, Paul Vigneron, in his book *Histoire des crises du clergé français contemporain (History of the Crises of the Contemporary French Clergy*, Téqui 1976), called on the bishops, in the face of the oncoming disaster, “to simply and loyally try the methods of apostolate and spirituality that [they had] rejected, perhaps too boldly, thirty years earlier.” To do so, he remarked, they would have to “admit at last that [they had been] mistaken.”

*In Germany*, a country currently being affected by the application of an extremely progressivist “Synodal Way,” the increasing number of Catholics falling away is easy to count thanks to the church tax: those who no longer wish to pay it for one reason or another



declare that they are no longer Catholic and are considered to have left the Church.

The July 10, 2020 issue of *Augsburger Allgemeine* reveals that in 2019, 272,771 faithful left the Catholic Church, which is 26% more than in 2018. This is no slow and imperceptible erosion; it is a significant disengagement.

Again, according to the same source, there were only 57 ordinations for the 27 dioceses of Germany in 2019, and last year there were 55. In the 60’s and 70’s, there were about 300 new priests every year; in 2000, there were 154. In other words, in 20 years, the number of priests ordained has dropped by 60%.

We could take these numbers as a fatality and simply recognize their reality, but that would scarcely be satisfying intellectually. We are therefore inclined to wonder *why*: what is the cause of this dizzying drop? Of course, it is impossible not to take into account the secularization of contemporary society, but does not the Council’s openness to this world and its modernity reveal that the Church herself has begun a process of self-secularization?

### **Can we see the facts without seeking their cause?**

Going beyond simple statistics, sociologists have analyzed them and, without establishing a causal relation between the two, pointed out a “proximity” between the Council and the decline in religious practice. Without being the cause, Vatican II was supposedly a “trigger.”

Here is what Guillaume Cuchet says in *Comment notre monde a cessé d'être chrétien* (*How Our World Ceased to Be Christian*, Seuil, 2018); for him, the decline in religious practice did indeed begin as early as 1965, the year Vatican II ended:

We do not see any other contemporary event that could have caused such a reaction. The chronology shows that it was not only the way the Council was applied after it closed that cause this rupture. By its very existence, insofar as it suddenly made the reform of the former standards imaginable, the Council was enough to overturn them, especially since the liturgical reform affecting the most visible part for most people started being applied in 1964 (p. 130).

Without ever entering into what he calls “the traditionalist or fundamentalist debate,” Cuchet offers a prudent explanation:

In the realm of piety, certain aspects of the liturgical reform that may have seemed secondary but psychologically and anthropologically speaking were not, such as the use of the vernacular, the familiar tone used to address God, Communion in the hand, and the relativization of former obligations, played an important role (p. 134).

But he offers another explanation that directly involves one of the conciliar texts, the one on religious liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae* (Dec. 7, 1965):

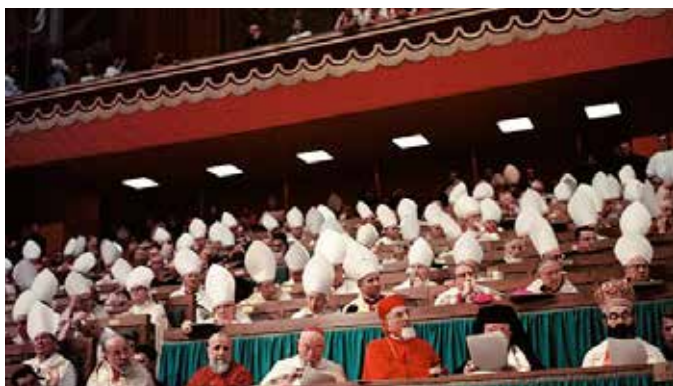
The text seemed like an unofficial permission to judge for oneself in matters of belief, behavior and practice. The fact is that this recent consecration of a sort of Catholic *Aufklärung*, according to Kant's definition of the Enlightenment (as a freedom to think for

oneself), contrasted strongly with the former regime. The theologian Louis Bouyer summed up the situation perfectly in 1968 with the sad phrase, “Each person now only believes and practices what he feels like” (p. 132-133).

In a word, the faithful took for their own personal use the “right of persons and communities to social and civil freedom in religious matters” that the Council proclaimed against all the former and constant teaching of the Church.

Another sociologist whose analysis is not without interest is Jérôme Fourquet, who in *L'Archipel français, naissance d'une nation multiple et divisée* (*The French Archipelago, The Birth of a Multiple and Divided Nation*, Seuil, 2019) remarks that France has become an archipelago, that is to say, a series of islands with little left in common because they lack the very idea of a common good. And when he wonders when exactly France became this “multiple and divided nation,” he answers—basing himself on G. Cuchet's work—that it was when the “Catholic matrix” disappeared; after that, everything fell apart, becoming scattered like an archipelago. Various communities appeared, a Muslim community, a Jewish community, a Catholic community, an organic community, a vegan community, a homosexual community... But they ignore each other. They are side by side and no longer form a society, but rather a *dissociety*, to borrow the expression of the philosopher Marcel De Corte.

The influence of the liturgical reform and of the doctrine of religious liberty over the faithful and the disappearance of the Church's role as a “matrix” in society are, according



to these sociologists, the factors that make Vatican II a “trigger” of the crisis in religious practice and in vocations. But was it really only a “trigger”?

After the inter-religious declaration of Abu Dhabi (Feb. 4, 2019), cosigned by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, and after the idolatrous worship of the Pachamama in the Vatican Gardens on Oct. 4, 2019, theologians have admitted there is a clearer causal relation.

### **A Council that is responsible but not guilty?**

In an article published on June 1, 2020 on *LifeSiteNews*, Bishop Athanasius Schneider, auxiliary bishop of Astana in Kazakhstan, declared that there is “no divine positive will or natural right to the diversity of religions” and he showed that the Declaration of Abu Dhabi was the logical consequence of the religious liberty promoted by Vatican Council II:

There is sufficient reason to suggest that a cause-and-effect relationship exists between the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, signed by Pope Francis and Sheik Ahmed el-Tayeb in Abu Dhabi, on February 4, 2019. On his return flight to Rome from the United Arab Emirates, Pope Francis himself told journalists: “There is one thing ... I would like to say. I openly reaffirm this: from the Catholic point of view the Document does not move one millimeter away from the Second Vatican Council. It is even cited, several times. The Document was crafted in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>1</sup>

The Kazakh prelate pointed out the rupture introduced by the conciliar declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, which sets forth

a theory never before taught by the constant Magisterium of the Church, *i.e.*, that man has the right founded in his own nature, “not to be prevented from acting in religious matters according to his own conscience, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits” (*ut in re religiosa neque impediatur, quominus iuxta suam conscientiam agat privatim et publice, vel solus vel aliis consociatus, intra debitos limites*, n. 2). According to this statement, man would have the right, based on nature itself (and therefore positively willed by God) not to be prevented from choosing, practicing and spreading, also collectively, the worship of an idol, and even the worship of Satan, since there are religions that worship Satan, for instance, the “church of Satan.” Indeed, in some countries, the “church of Satan” is recognized with the same legal value as all other religions.

In an article published on June 10, 2020 on *Chiesa e post concilio*, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, former apostolic nuncio to the United States, approved Bishop Schneider’s analysis without sharing his opinion as to a possible solution to the present doctrinal crisis. He said the Council needs more than a correction; it needs to be condemned. He did, however, write,

The merit of [Bishop Schneider’s] essay lies first of all in its grasp of the causal link between the principles enunciated or implied by Vatican II and their logical consequent effect in the doctrinal, moral, liturgical, and disciplinary deviations that have arisen and progressively developed to the present day.<sup>2</sup>





The two prelates recognized a causal relation between the conciliar document on religious liberty and the inter-religious declaration of Abu Dhabi. Would this be enough to persuade the supporters of Vatican II that it was responsible for the present doctrinal and pastoral crisis? It would have been naïve to believe so.

For the fact of the matter is that despite its bitter fruits that have been thoroughly tasted, the Council does not wish to be judged by its effects but only by its ability to inspire dreams, its ability to answer contemporary utopias. It is noteworthy that Pope Francis does not hesitate to use the word “dream” repeatedly, and even *ad nauseam*.

In his exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (Feb. 12, 2020), he proposes no less than four dreams: a social dream, a cultural dream, an ecological dream and an ecclesial dream. In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (Oct. 4, 2020), he declares,

Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth, which is our common home, each of us bringing the

richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all (§8).<sup>3</sup>

And in his book *Let Us Dream* (Simon and Schuster, Dec. 2020), he invites the reader to “Come, let us talk this over. Let us dare to dream...” Which Msgr. Benoist de Sinety translates in his presentation of the French version of the papal text as: the pope invites us “to dream not small, personal and self-sufficient dreams, but to dream together, to dream big.”

Dreams ignore the laws of real life. A dream scenario is completely emancipated from the principle of causality, and the effects in it have no proportionate cause. A dream tree is not to be judged by its fruits. And just as you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink, it is very difficult to bring back to reality a conciliar mind that wants to dream.

Which is why the testimony of a simple layman proves useful. He offers no sociological or philosophical or theological analysis, but simply common sense. The common sense that tells us there is no smoke without fire.

## The testimony of a convert

Aldo Maria Valli is a journalist who specializes in religious issues. He comes from progressivism, having been close with Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, the archbishop of Milan who inspires Pope Francis. On July 12, 2020, he explained on his blog how he discovered Tradition. I will let him speak and only add as little as possible.

For many people of my generation (I was born in 1958), the Council was not a problem for decades: it was simply a fact. Born and raised in the post-conciliar Church, for a long time I saw the Council as something ineluctable: at a given time, the Church had to make certain choices. (...)

Now that I am getting older and feel the need to go to the essential of the Faith, it seems to me that I can say, in all humility and as a simple baptized Catholic, that the Council was inspired by *a deadly mistake: the desire to please the world*.

I realize that my declaration may seem hasty, and I apologize to the specialists in the matter, but the more I study the years of the Council, the more convinced I am that there was a sort of inferiority complex in large parts of the Church, beginning with John XXIII, with regards to the world, a world that, at the time, was in complete upheaval and seemed so alive. Hence the desire not to seem behind but to show a sympathetic side of the Church, in the literal sense of the word, sympathetic as in one who *suffers with*, who participates in the joys and pangs, avoiding any position of superiority or judgmental attitude.

I remember that when I used to speak of the Council with Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, the archbishop of Milan liked to use the expression “the Church of the Council as a Church of intercession.” Interceding, the cardinal would say, means walking in the middle, and that is what John XXIII wanted to do: walk in the middle of the world, without rising above or going ahead, but also without falling behind.

Martini used to say that for him, the Council was like opening the windows and letting fresh air into a church that smelled musty and moldy. That is exactly what he said, and I thought I saw them, those men of faith who, inspired by all those intellectual *stimuli*, passionately discussed theological and moral issues so that the word of the

Gospel could once again shine in all its beauty and novelty, relieved of its pitfalls and inlays.

But, says, A. M. Valli,

the underlying problem remains, and I mentioned it earlier: the desire to please the world. Now I obviously do not wish to psychoanalyze the Council, but it is truly difficult not to get the impression that deep down, this need was there. Pope Roncalli’s optimism was that of someone who, tired of a Church lagging behind the world and considered as a sort of surly and hateful old aunt, wished her to be seen as a loving and gentle mother, trustworthy and welcoming. An understandable desire. Were it not for the fact that the minute the Church, more or less consciously, wishes to please the world, she inevitably begins to *betray herself* and to *betray her mission*. For Jesus never wished to please the world or lessen His standards to appear friendly and dialogue.

And indeed, St. Paul tells us, “*Noli conformari huic saeculo*—And be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2). That is how the Catholic identity disappears and the “Catholic matrix,” to borrow Jérôme Fourquet’s expression, disappears from society, leaving it to become an archipelago.

A. M. Valli goes on to explain,

With the Council, the windows were indeed opened, and the air came in. But along with a pleasant sensation of freshness came the ideas of the world, marked by sin, and the Church was contaminated.

What does “marked by sin” mean? In a word, it means marked by the desire to *put man in God’s place*, because deep down that is what it is today, that is what it was yesterday and that is what it has always been.



Aldo Maria Valli, well-known Vaticanist.

Of course, not everything began with the Council, for certain underground rivers had already been flowing for a while, but the Council was the moment when the desire to please the world, and therefore to put man in God's place, clearly emerged.

He goes on to point out the ineluctable effect of this vast update that was, in fact, an update to correspond to the taste of the times.

But the true tragedy of the Council lay elsewhere. The Church began her update and renewal *after the world*. It is always the same thing. When the Church tries to be like the world, she lags behind. Because the world on the path of sin, that is, in its attempt to put man in God's place, moves quickly and is always inventing new things, and the Church, however hard she tries, cannot keep up.

Thus, the Council set off after the world at the very moment when the world was already realizing, albeit confusedly, that man's desire for independence from God could lead only to enormous disasters in every respect, be it social and political or cultural and moral.

Within the Church, few people realized that this "operation friendliness" was marked by obvious theological contradictions but also by a *strategic mistake*. The dominant version of the story said the opposite, and against a story imposed with great intensity (by some with good intentions and true enthusiasm, by others dishonestly and with ulterior motives), very little can be done, as we see today.

This "strategic mistake" that consisted in adapting the Church to the spirit of the modern world and by this very fact forcing her to lag behind was mentioned by the historian Patrick Buisson in his recent book *La fin d'un monde (The End of a World)*, Algin Michel, 2021):

This Christianity partially reduced to humanism, to a holy parousia of "Man" in whose name they were summoned to kneel before the world, this sudden infatuation for the human sciences, came at the very time when a theoretical anti-humanism was developing with the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, and when Michel Foucault was announcing the "death of man" as a "figure of knowledge" in *Les Mots et les Choses (Words and Things)*, 1966). The supposed common basis shared by believers and unbelievers was unexpectedly crumbling under the feet of the con-

iliar fathers whose brand-new *aggiornamento* was seen by shrewder observers as already behind the times.

The conciliar clergy did not stop at adopting the clothing fashions, dressing as civilians to fit in with the masses; they also espoused the intellectual fashions: Freud-Marxism, structuralism... fashions whose proper characteristic it is to go out of fashion.

### An accusing testimony

But back to Aldo Maria Valli, who points out the practical incoherency of the Council at the conclusion of his testimony: "It is curious to see how the Council, that wished to be non-dogmatic, itself became a *dogma*." In his presentation of a collective work entitled *L'altro Vaticano II (The Other Vatican II)*, Chorabooks, 2021), he proposed on his blog on January 30 a way to undo this incoherency, suggesting that Vatican II be "*de-dogmatized*." This

Council that wished to be non-dogmatic, itself became a dogma. If we were to consider it as an event with multiple facets, with the hopes it gave us, but also with its intrinsic limits and the errors of perspective that marked it, we would be serving the Church and the quality of our Faith well. Often, looking at the origins of an illness causes a feeling of sadness, and an insidious impression of failure can arise. But that is what we have to do if we wish to find the path to a cure.

And he paid homage to the founder of the Society of St. Pius X:

Half a century after the end of the Council, it is finally necessary to deepen the substance of the questions raised by Archbishop Lefebvre, but also by many other observers and representatives of the Church, including the recent stances taken by Archbishop Viganò and Bishop Schneider.

The testimony of a simple layman shares the critical judgments of these two prelates, 45 years after Abp. Lefebvre's *I Accuse the Council* (1976). He fully shares these judgments that explain what he has seen and undergone.

Regarding the "hermeneutics of reform in continuity" promoted by Benedict XVI in



2005 in an attempt to clear the Council, Aldo Maria Valli writes:

The hermeneutics of continuity do not hold up to the facts. For example, as far as the social kingship of Christ and the objective falseness of non-Christian religions go, Vatican II marks a rupture with the teaching of the previous popes and leads to the objectively unacceptable declaration of Abu Dhabi signed by Francis. Accusing critics of being attached to a past that needs to be left behind implicitly affirms the need to “go beyond” the teaching of all the popes up until Pius XII. But “such a theological position,” observes Bishop Schneider, “is ultimately Protestant and heretical, since the Catholic Faith implies an uninterrupted tradition, an uninterrupted continuity, without any perceptible doctrinal and liturgical rupture.”

By rejecting Benedict XVI’s attempt to save the Council, Aldo Maria Valli returns to Archbishop Lefebvre’s debate with Paul VI almost half a century ago.

Today, in the year 2021, it is time to abandon the unfortunate method of “making circles square,” in other words, trying to justify the unjustifiable. The expression “hermeneutics of continuity” cannot be used as a magic formula to hide reality, and the reality is that the Council brought with it the *seeds of the catastrophe* we have before our eyes today.

Which is what Archbishop Viganò declared in a study published on *One Peter Five* on September 21, 2020: “The Abu Dhabi Declaration would not have been conceivable without the premise of *Lumen Gentium*.”<sup>24</sup>

A. M. Valli’s testimony helps us to understand why we are so uncomfortable with this Church lagging behind, running after the world, trying to keep up, to please and above all not to displease: she is no longer a beacon, but rather a red light pathetically hoping to become a beacon again by multiplying her repentances, thus denying those who

came before.

That is the true cause of our suffering at seeing the men of the Church try to seduce the enemies of the Church, forgetting that she has a treasure with which to convert them. The alarming statistics that we discussed at the beginning of this conference are simply a sign, a sort of thermometer. They are important, and rather than breaking the thermometer, we need to look for the cause of the fever: the infection. It is ideological.

In the face of this general crisis, the conciliar Catholics excuse themselves, saying that contemporary society is complex, when they should really be accusing themselves and admitting that they have a complex. Their new pastoral approach is based on an inferiority complex. An unavowed and unavowable complex, for it reveals a loss of the Faith: they espouse the ideas of the world, forgetting that the Church is the spouse of Christ.

### Uncovering bitter fruits

But a question remains: what particular event made Aldo Maria Valli understand the responsibility of the Council? What fruit made him judge the tree? When questioned on *Radio Spada* on Feb. 27, 2021, he explained how he had discovered Tradition and the effects of Vatican Council II on the life of the Church:

All in all, I believe that the fundamental incoherency towards Tradition was already present in the opening speech by John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*. When claiming that the Council’s task was to defend and spread a sure

doctrine, the pope said, “Nowadays however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity.”<sup>5</sup> There is the rub. From a Christian point of view, it is not logical to oppose mercy and severity. In fact, severity in the defense and spread of true doctrine is the highest form of mercy, for its purpose is the salvation of souls. Through this crack, made at the very beginning of the Council, *relativism crept into the Church*, and abuse and treason found their way in. In a word, the world entered in and man was put in the place of God. The work of subversion had already begun long before, it is true, but the Council acted as a detonator, also due to an unjustifiably optimistic attitude towards modernity.

But the precise event that opened his eyes was this:

The triggering factor was the publication of *Amoris Laetitia* in 2016. My doubts were already there at the beginning of this century and had progressively increased since 2013, with the election of Francis, but the apostolic exhortation “on love in the family” opened my eyes for good and for all. I was forced to see that at that point, ambiguity and relativism had not only entered into the Church but had taken on the form of her Magisterium. I have to say that at first, as far as *Amoris Laetitia* goes, I was so incredulous that I denied the obvious. I read it several times, and, in the end, I had to face the painful reality. The document is imbued with the idea that God has a duty to forgive and man has a right to be forgiven, otherwise it would be necessary to convert. *The eternal divine law is bent to accommodate the supposed autonomy of man*. The concept of discernment is instrumentalized to exonerate sin. I would say that *Amoris Laetitia* validated the revolution that had taken place: not a change of paradigm (a vague expression used to justify the subversion), but the triumph of the modernist vision both in its contents and in its method.

He was therefore forced to judge the current pope, without falling into sedevacantism that he explicitly rejects.

The perspective adopted by Pope Bergoglio seems to be that of the world, which often does not completely reject the idea of God but rejects the aspects that are less in keeping with the dominant permissiveness. The world

does not want a true father-loving insofar as he also judges—but a buddy, or better yet, a traveling companion who allows anything and says, “Who am I to judge?” And Francis offers the world this god who is not a father but a traveling companion. That is why I maintain that Francis does not act like a pope, because he does not confirm his brothers in the Faith. The proof of this is that he is applauded by those far from the Faith and the Church, who feel confirmed in being far, whereas his ambiguities and deviations disconcert those closer.

\* \* \*

At the end of this first part, we can concede that the Council is not the only cause of the crises in vocations and the dizzying drop in religious practice, or of the doctrinal, moral and liturgical rupture with the bi-millennial Tradition, but it is inadmissible for this Council to be the one and only event in the history of the Church that we have no right to question, as if it were an untouchable dogma, a sanctuaried truth.

#### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/bishop-schneider-how-church-could-correct-erroneous-view-that-god-wills-diversity-of-religions>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.marcotosatti.com/2020/06/10/vigano-writes-on-the-vatican-ii-we-are-at-the-redde-rationem/>
- <sup>3</sup> [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html)
- <sup>4</sup> <https://onepeterfive.com/archbishop-vigano-is-vatican-ii-untouchable/>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/god-man-and-the-universe-week-two/gaudet-mater-ecclesia>





Fr. Juan Carlos Iscara, SSPX

## Aquinas counts vengeance among the virtues. But isn't taking revenge a bad thing?

Among the social virtues, those that facilitate the life of men in society, St. Thomas lists *vindicta*—which we should translate by “just punishment” to avoid the pejorative sense that the words “revenge” or “vengeance” usually has in English. It is a virtue related to the cardinal virtue of justice that aims at punishing the wrongdoer for the crime committed.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the punishment of criminals, the modern world seems to oscillate at whim between two extremes, disproportionate harshness and excessive leniency. Therefore, it is necessary to clari-

fy what we understand for “vengeance,” just punishment.

There is no doubt that restoring the order disturbed by a bad action is a good and virtuous work, demanded by justice itself and the need to preserve social order. However, due to our fallen nature, in the infliction of punishment it is very easy to get carried away by sinful motives (disorderly anger, hatred of the criminal, *etc.*), which would make such punishment lose its justice, its virtuous character, turning it into a true sin.

St. Thomas explains all this:

Vengeance consists in the infliction of a penal evil on one who has sinned. Accordingly, in the matter of vengeance, we must consider the mind of the avenger. For if his intention is directed chiefly to the evil of the person on whom he takes vengeance and rests there, then

his vengeance is altogether unlawful: because to take pleasure in another's evil belongs to hatred, which is contrary to the charity whereby we are bound to love all men. Nor is it an excuse that he intends the evil of one who has unjustly inflicted evil on him, as neither is a man excused for hating one that hates him: for a man may not sin against another just because the latter has already sinned against him, since this is to be overcome by evil, which was forbidden by the Apostle, who says (Romans 12:21): "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." If, however, the avenger's intention be directed chiefly to some good, to be obtained by means of the punishment of the person who has sinned (for instance that the sinner may amend, or at least that he may be restrained and others be not disturbed, that justice may be upheld, and God honored), then vengeance may be lawful, provided other due circumstances be observed (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, 108,1).

With these distinctions the true meaning and the dangers of this virtue become clear. For greater abundance, St. Thomas examines some objections that may be raised against it and, in solving them, rounds off the doctrine.

Some object that he who takes revenge usurps a function exclusively of God (Deut. 32:35), and that is sin. St. Thomas answers that whoever exercises vengeance on the wicked in the exercise of his functions and jurisdiction—for example, the civil authorities—does not usurp anything from God, but uses the power that He grants him (Rom. 13:4). But if someone takes revenge outside of the order established by God, he usurps what is proper to Him, and therefore sins.

Others, more pious, object that those who are good must tolerate the bad and endure patiently their injuries. St. Thomas points out that this is how it should be when those injuries refer to their own persons, but not if they are injuries against God or against neighbor. Because, as St. John Chrysostom says, "to be patient with one's injuries is worthy of praise; but to want to conceal injuries against God is impious."

In practice, it will rarely be convenient for a private person to attempt, by himself,

to punish the guilty (except by repelling an unjust aggression in legitimate defense), because under the pretext of justice and equity an exacerbated self-love and perhaps true hatred of neighbor will often be hidden. That is why it is always advisable to forgive the injuries of others instead of punishing them, unless the honor of God, the common good or the amendment of others require that we demand reparation for the injury.

## Which are the natural properties of marriage?

There are two, unity and indissolubility. These properties derive from the very nature and ends of marriage. Therefore, they do not depend on the will of the spouses, and they are not affected by the accidental circumstances of a concrete marriage.

*Unity* is the bond existing between one man and one woman. It is demanded by the primary end of marriage, which is procreation and education of children. It opposes polyandry (one woman with many husbands), as it makes paternity uncertain and, in consequence, it makes also uncertain to whom belongs the duty of education of the children. Moreover, it is unnatural not to know, and therefore honor, one's father. Strictly speaking, it is not against polygamy (one man with many women), but it also causes serious difficulties, both regarding the education of children and the secondary end of marriage.

Unity is also demanded by the secondary end of marriage, the mutual love and support of the spouses. Polygamy causes an inequality of rights between the spouses, as the man has full, exclusive rights on the women, but not the women on man. Moreover, it affects the real human and spiritual love and causes discords and jealousies between women and children.

*Indissolubility* signifies that the bond subsists as long as spouses live and it cannot be dissolved by any motive. It is demanded by the primary end, because both the care and

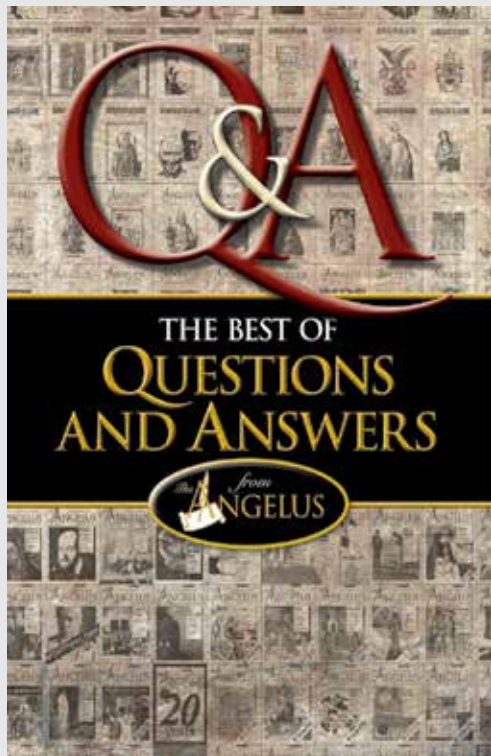
education of children require the permanent union of spouses. Even if they do not have children, the general rule is not affected by concrete circumstances (the law is not founded on extraordinary cases).

In any case, the secondary end of marriage still demands indissolubility. Human love is not only sexual impulse—sex is integrated as part of human love. Without indissolubility, one risks falling prey to the selfishness of instinct, and the union of the family being abandoned to the vagaries of our movements of pleasure. Indissolubility defends conjugal love, as true love is needed for the mutual help and perfection of the spouses.

The common life and support of the spouses requires daily effort. If the possibility of divorce is allowed, it has a magnifying effect

on the unavoidable conflicts that arise in common life.

Moreover, the dissolution of a marriage affects the children morally and affectively, and it is also injustice towards the spouse, as the gift of self that was promised in the marriage ceremony is forgotten when difficulties arise.



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# Thought for the Day

By Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre

“WHAT WILL THIS NEW YEAR BE FOR US?”

God only knows, but by our desire for sanctification we can turn for help to Our Lord's will to save our soul and all souls. How consoling it is to think that our everyday life can be transformed into numerous graces of sanctification and Redemption! So it was throughout the life of Our Lord and of the Virgin Mary.”

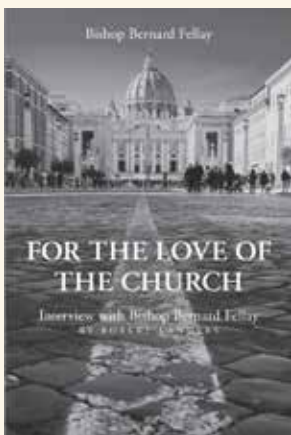
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—Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (December 28th Feast of the Holy Innocents)

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Bishop Bernard Fellay is one of those episcopally consecrated by the Archbishop. After the death of Archbishop Lefebvre, Bishop Fellay went on to serve as the Superior General of the Society of Saint Pius X from 1994 to 2018. Among his many acts as

Superior General, he worked for the canonical regularization of the Society of Saint Pius X and currently serves as General Counselor of the Society alongside its current Superior General, Fr. Davide Pagliarani.

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# An Interview

## With Fr. Jacques Emily, SSPX

Prior of St. John Vianney Priory & Chaplain of the SSPX Sisters' Novitiate in Browerville, MN

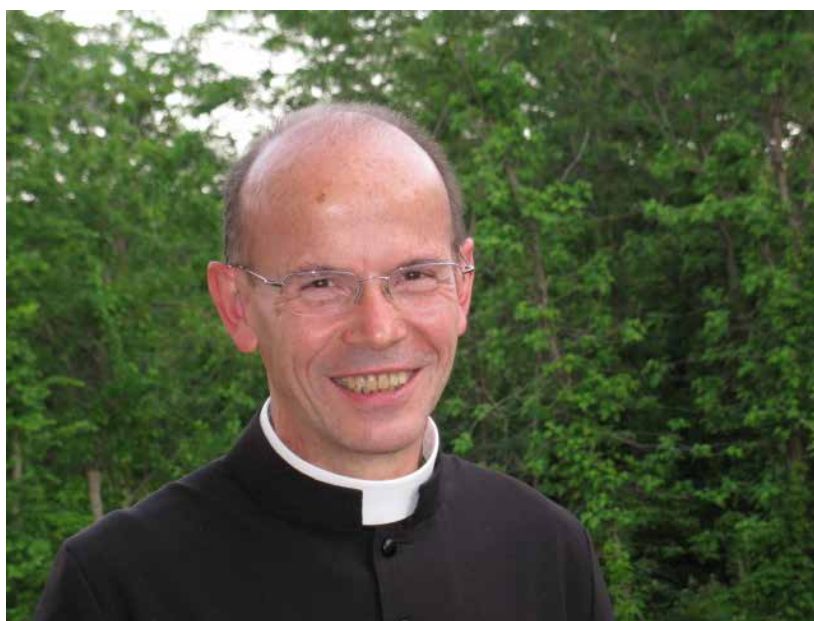
Fr. Dominique Bourmaud, SSPX

### **Dear Father, would you tell us about your apostolate in the US?**

**I**t was Fr. Arnauld Rostand, who was then our District Superior, who appointed me Prior of St. John Vianney Priory, as well as Chaplain of our Society Sisters at the Sacred Heart Novitiate in Browerville, in August of 2014. After having spent nine years at the Retreat House in Los Gatos, California, preaching retreats, this appointment came to me as a big surprise. Nevertheless, I received it with joyful gratitude, and since then, I sincerely thank God for the tremendous grace He has granted me by this nomination.

### **Could you describe your role of Chaplain to the Novitiate?**

To celebrate the daily Mass for the Sisters, hear their confessions, teach classes to the novices, and provide spiritu-



al conferences and recollections to the professed are the main functions of the chaplain. Thus, it is a great consolation for a priest to be able, by his ministry, to provide for these chosen souls the graces and blessings that Our Blessed Lord wants to infuse into the hearts of His Spouses!

This is indeed the beautiful mission of the Chaplain, which consists of being the special intermediary between the Divine Spouse and these privileged souls who, by their vows, espouse the Son of God as their own!

What a sublime mission for a priest to be called for this apostolate! By this min-

istry, the chaplain intends to help these spouses of Christ to grow in their union with Christ so that by the strength of their intimacy with Him they may more profusely diffuse the graces of their Divine Spouse upon the Church and the souls. It is thus, in the role of intermediary between the Divine Spouse and His religious spouses that the Chaplain exercises a certain spiritual paternity, which has been granted by Christ Himself.

What a responsibility, but also what a blessed consolation, to become a humble instrument of God to contribute to the sanctification of the spouses of Christ and thus, by way of consequence, to the sanctification of so many souls! This is the wonderful and consoling apostolate of a Chaplain of religious sisters, for which I am most grateful to God for having called on me for this endeavor at the conclusion of my priestly life.

**It seems, by this description of your task as Chaplain, that you exercise a kind of spiritual fatherhood towards the sisters. Can you explain to what limit this spiritual paternity extends?**

Every priest is a father of souls, no matter how specific or broad the ministry in which he labors. So, in this sense, the Chaplain of a religious community exercises a certain paternity towards the sisters as we just explained, but not in the sense that he



becomes the *spiritual director* of the sisters. The ministry of the *spiritual direction* of the sisters belongs exclusively to the Mistress of Novices.

Nevertheless, teaching spirituality, giving spiritual conferences, preaching recollections, and exercising the ministry of confession, definitively invest the Chaplain with a certain fatherly influence over the spiritual formation of these elite souls. The Chaplain must never forget, however, that these religious souls belong exclusively to no one else other than Jesus Christ Himself, as His own and chosen spouses. So, the fatherly influence of the Chaplain over the formation of sisters is entirely dependent upon Jesus Christ: it comes from Jesus Christ and leads these consecrated souls to Him.

This is certainly a serious responsibility for the Chaplain, but it is also for him a tremendous consolation! Indeed, the Chaplain knows, perhaps more than anyone else, the spiritual impact that the sisters have on the Church and the world. He recognizes very well the hidden but crucial influence that they have on the Heart of Jesus, through their prayers and sacrifices, for the sanctification and salvation of souls. And this is true not only for the laity but even more so for the sanctification of priests, which is one of the most beneficial and blessed purposes of their vocation.

The Chaplain is thus, by his role as intermediary between Jesus Christ and the sisters, at the heart of this apostolate of the contemplative souls for the Church and salvation of souls. The more

the Chaplain can help the sisters to sanctify themselves, the closer their union with Christ becomes, and thus, the greater and more abundant the graces they obtain for the Church and so many souls!

How many souls have been and will be saved, thanks and in proportion to the degree of sanctity of our sisters? Only in heaven will we know the tremendous work that they did for the salvation of so many souls and of so many priests. Who can tell, for instance, how many thousands of souls and priests have been saved by St. Therese of the Infant Jesus?

We remember how Archbishop Lefevre had clearly understood the efficacy of the Contemplative Life to support the apostolic work of the missionaries. As a result, when he was in Africa, he consistent-

ly summoned Carmelites or contemplative congregations to come and settle near the new foundations of the missionary Fathers.

**How does your apostolate with the sisters and your understanding of the necessity of their mission shape your own spiritual life and orientation?**

Understanding the solemnity of the vocation to which the sisters are called, the Chaplain realizes that his own role is consequently a very sacred one. Upon the sanctity of the sisters depends the salvation of their own souls, yes, but also of countless others. Their degree of holiness will determine the perfection in which they accomplish their vocation. Thus, the Chap-

lain realizes that, so closely involved in the spiritual missionary work of the sisters as he is, he himself must focus on his own sanctification if he is to lead them in holiness. It is a key motivation to realize that the more our sisters grow in holiness, the more souls will be saved, the more graces the priests will receive for their own sanctification, and finally, the more families will be sanctified. The spiritual relationship between sisters and priest is truly a symbiotic one—the sisters indeed need the priests in order to avail themselves of the graces from Jesus Christ by the sacraments to become saints, but the priests rely on the prayers and sacrifices of the sisters for their ministry and their own sanctification.



## What are the challenges of your work? The joys?

This sublime mission of our sisters for the Church, for the sanctification of priests and families and for the salvation of souls is precisely the real challenge! How unworthy the Chaplain feels to be chosen for such a mission! Keenly aware of his role in the salvation of so many souls through his cooperation with the work of sanctification of the sisters, the Chaplain is confronted by his own unworthiness and the enormity of the task he is called to accomplish. This allows the Chaplain to recognize, with great humility, in Whom he must place all his hopeful expectations, in nothing else but on the grace of Jesus Christ, that will support him to accomplish the task entrusted to him.

But, if this mission is so challenging, at the same time it is the source of great consolation and joy to think that, by this ministry, the Chaplain can contribute to the spiritual formation of these warriors of Christ. They are indeed critical warriors, even though serving in the shadows, they are far from being useless soldiers, as men of little Faith might believe. Quite the opposite, they are actually fighting on the front line for the victory of Christ the King over his enemies.



**You mention the misconception of the sisters occupying a place in the shadow “at the back of Christ’s army”; this is perhaps due to their seeming material inactivity. The secular mindset would assign more value to physical work with external results, than to spiritual labors, and would claim that these women are wasting their talents, stifling their potential, and hiding themselves away to no purpose. Can you comment further on this?**

In the words of Fr. Bernard-Marie de Chivre, “action is defined above all by the quality of what comes of it” (*The Mass of Saint Pius V*, p. 5). What can be of higher quality than the salvation of souls

for the glory of God? This is something the world can never understand. The greatest activity on earth takes place hidden in the tabernacle. From His state of seeming inactivity, the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus produces the infinite intensity of the action of Grace. Were the world to lose the Eucharist, it would fall apart. As St. Padre Pio said: “The earth could exist more easily without the sun than without the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.”

Thus, it is in imitation of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, that the sisters hide themselves away in the “tabernacle” of their convent, there to unite themselves to His continual activity. With the Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the cross, they participate in her hidden but crucial role of Co-Redemptrix. By their prayers and penances,



they draw from the Eucharist, in union with Mary, those countless graces which God has determined to give only as a result of being asked.

If it is by Her presence at the foot of the Cross that Mary became the Mother of the elect, it is also by their oblation and their presence at the foot of the altar that our Sisters participate in the spiritual maternity of Mary and in her role as Co-Redemptrix.

This is the great vocation of our sisters: to continue what the Blessed Virgin, Co-Redemptrix, did on Calvary and to participate in her role as Mediatrix of All Grace in heaven.

Without the spiritual support from these seemingly inactive women who are “wasting their talents in the convent,” countless graces would be lost, active ministry would fail, and souls would not be saved. How many priests owe their vocation to their “little sisters” in the convent who continually support them with their prayers and sacrifices? St. Therese of the Infant Jesus has been given the title of Patroness of the Missions precisely because of her dedication to the spiritual support of missionary priests in foreign lands, all accomplished from her tiny cloister in France.

Just as the heart is the life-support of the body, just as the mother is the spiritual and emotional heart of the home, just as the nurse is the comfort and support of the patient, just as Mary was the

hidden support and love of Jesus, just as the Eucharist is the hidden Life of the Church, so the sisters are to the ministry of the priests, the conversion of sinners, the support of families, the salvation of souls. These are indeed the marvelous and precious fruits of the hidden activity of our sisters that the world cannot understand!

**This vision and understanding of the vocation of the Sisters of the Society of St. Pius X highlights the sublime mission to which these souls have been called. Could you give a word of encouragement to the young ladies who are considering a religious vocation?**

Archbishop Lefebvre defines the vocation of our Sisters with these words:

And so you, helpers of the priests, not only with your hands but also with your souls and minds—helpers of the priesthood, of Our Lord Jesus Christ’s Sacrifice... for the extension of His kingship, the extension of his love—you should unite yourselves in a very special way to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Like Her, close to Her divine Son, you will share His sufferings and also contribute to the redemption of souls insofar as you are able to do so.

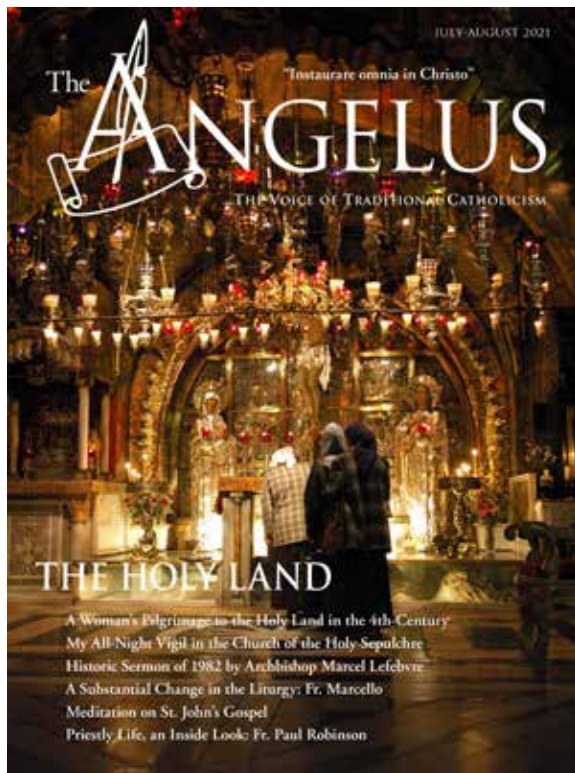
Unfortunately, this beautiful vocation of our Sisters of the Society is not sufficiently known and understood among our faithful and young

ladies. And yet, the key role of our Sisters in this crisis of the Church, working as auxiliary to the priesthood for the restoration of all things in Christ, is of essential importance.

The spirituality and the apostolate of our Sisters deserve to be more widely known and promoted. Young ladies who still have enthusiasm for great causes, such as the defense of the Church and the salvation of souls, need to be educated and made aware of the grandeur of the vocation of our Sisters of the Society. They need to be enkindled with the fire of divine love which has animated these great saints like St. Joan of Arc, St. Therese, St. Bernadette and so many others, that they may, in their own turn, make this worthy sacrifice by generously offering their lives under the patronage and in the imitation of Our Lady of Compassion!

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# THE LAST WORD

**Fr. David Sherry**  
District Superior of Canada

Dear Reader,

The Catholic Church is condemned by many. But, according to G.K. Chesterton, the heretics witness that She is condemned for all sorts of things that She Herself has condemned! Condemned for denying freedom, we find that She Herself condemns those who deny freedom. Spurned for being anti-sex, we find that She fulminates against those who destroy and denature it.

Not only that, She is condemned for opposing excesses. She is too spiritual (virginity?), and She is also too material (ah, the riches of the Vatican, the pomp of the papal court!) She is too mixed up with the power of the State (Catholic kings?), and She is not mixed-up enough with the power of the State (Praemunire and Romish popery!).

But there is more: not only do we find that the accusations against the Church are not true, when we dig a little, we find that it is precisely the opposite that is the truth. “The Church is anti-science (Galileo).” But when you investigate, you find that not only did the Church not condemn Galileo’s science per se (rather, his attempts to become the infallible interpreter of scripture), She has always and ever been the vindicator and protector of science, and wherever She brought the Faith, reason flourished as never before.

Here’s a classic. “The Catholic Church is anti-woman, and it is because of it that woman has been oppressed. Thanks to the throwing off of the Church, woman is at last free.” Not only is this not true, it is precisely the opposite that is the truth. Before the coming of Christ, paganism treated woman not as a person, but as a thing. Forced marriage, polygamy, and divorce bear witness. Jesus Christ came into the world and what happened? No more polygamy, no more divorce, and no more forced marriage. The wife is not one of many within a man’s harem, she can’t be got rid of because she’s out of date or a nag, and she is free to say “I don’t.” And if you look at her as a thing, you have sinned. The result of this “oppression” by the Church? The liberation and dignity of woman.

And now? Woman returns to slavery. Divorce is back, polygamy is linear rather than simultaneous, and rather than forcing marriage, we’ve just got rid of it altogether. Wife, mother and queen of a home? She should be out making money, like a good slave. . .

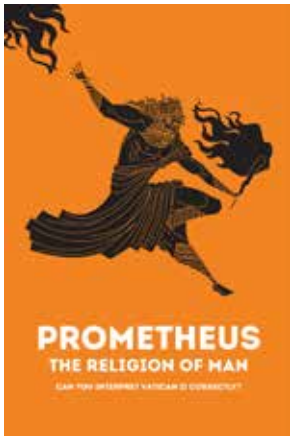
Fr. David Sherry

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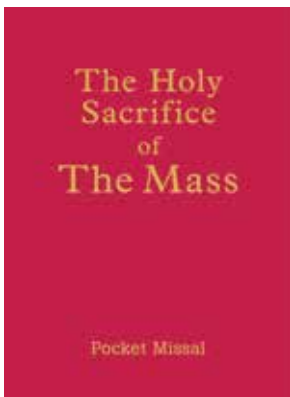
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